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## Southwest Washington, D.C. Urban Renewal Area

**Historic American Building Survey (HABS) DC-856  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior**

**ZONING COMMISSION**  
CASE No. 05-38  
**ZONING COMMISSION**  
EXHIBIT No. 122  
District of Columbia  
CASE NO. 05-38  
EXHIBIT NO. 62A1

**SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON, URBAN RENEWAL AREA**

Bounded by Independence Avenue, Washington Avenue, South

Capitol Street, Canal Street, P Street, Maine Avenue &

Washington Channel, Fourteenth Street, D Street, & Twelfth Street

Washington

District of Columbia

**HABS DC-856**

*DC-856*

**PHOTOGRAPHS**

**WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA**

**HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY**

National Park Service

U.S. Department of the Interior

1849 C Street NW

Washington, DC 20240-0001

## **HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY**

### **SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON, D.C., URBAN RENEWAL AREA**

**HABS No. DC-856**

- Location:** Southwest Washington, District of Columbia. The urban renewal area encompassed most, but not all, of the Southwest quadrant. Its ultimate boundaries included the following: Independence Avenue on the north, between Twelfth Street and Washington Avenue (formerly Canal Street); Washington Avenue on the northeast, between Independence Avenue and D Street; South Capitol Street on the east, between D and M streets; Canal Street on the southeast, between M and P streets; P Street on the south, between Canal Street and Maine Avenue; Maine Avenue and the Washington Channel on the southwest, between P and Fourteenth streets; Fourteenth Street on the west, between D and F streets; D Street on the northwest, between Fourteenth and Twelfth streets; and Twelfth Street, between D Street and Independence Avenue, to the origin.
- Time Period:** Approximately 1945-73. While related events occurred prior to this time period, this history marks the start of Southwest's urban renewal with the Redevelopment Act of 1945, which created the D.C. Redevelopment Land Agency (RLA) and initiated the process of urban renewal in Washington, D.C. In 1950, the National Capital Park and Planning Commission (NCPPC) published a Comprehensive Plan, which identifies the Southwest as a "problem area" in need of redevelopment. At the end of 1952, with the passage of the first urban renewal plan for a Southwest project area (area B), urban renewal moved from the planning to action stage. In late 1953, the RLA began property acquisition, and relocation started shortly thereafter. The demolition of approximately 4,800 structures in the area began in spring 1954. While the urban renewal plans were in effect for forty years, the vast majority of the construction – including that of all of the residential communities – was completed by 1970. Also at this time, public and governmental attention shifted away from the Southwest area to a second Washington, D.C., urban renewal project, located in a portion of Northwest. By 1973, virtually all of the originally planned development was complete. The focus of this report is on the buildings and sites within the Southwest urban renewal area that were constructed, renovated, or otherwise impacted during this time period.
- Present Owner:** Multiple organizations and individuals own property within the Southwest urban renewal area today. The largest among these include the Federal government, housing cooperatives, and private real estate developers, including JBG Companies, Kaempfer Company, and Forest City Enterprises.

**Present Use:** The area includes all streets and avenues, parks, buildings, objects, and open space within the Southwest urban renewal area. These entities are presently put to a variety of land uses, primarily including transportation, residential space, community space (including schools, parks, theaters, and other services), commercial space (including offices and retail), and government (Federal and D.C.) office buildings.

**Significance:** Southwest Washington, D.C., was the site of one of the earliest urban renewal efforts in the United States, and the first such renewal effort in the Nation's Capital. While not the largest urban renewal project ever pursued in the District, it was the city's only full-scale and most comprehensive attempt to redevelop an entire neighborhood.<sup>1</sup>

Over the course of roughly two decades of execution from the early 1950s to the early 1970s, the urban renewal of Southwest displaced approximately 1,500 businesses and 23,000 residents, or almost 6,000 families, from 560 acres of land that had formerly been occupied by some of the worst slum conditions and alley dwellings in the city. By the timing of its rough completion, it had replaced these with approximately 13,000 middle and upper class residents living in approximately 5,800 new units of housing, which consisted of individually owned and rented units, cooperatives, and condominiums. These dwellings were arranged in complexes of Modernist high-rises and townhouses, interspersed between communal residential squares. In addition to residential structures, the new Southwest also included a Town Center with a suburban shopping center, a revived waterfront, a Federal employment center, a public plaza and promenade, highways, a theater, and other community facilities.

While neither the first nor the largest urban renewal project in the nation, at the time of its initiation, the urban renewal of Southwest was the largest such effort yet undertaken in the U.S.<sup>2</sup> and the largest "close-in" project yet undertaken close to a downtown area.<sup>3</sup> The amount of land acquired was also one of the largest yet acquired by the U.S. Government,<sup>4</sup> and its plans – although not fully realized – represented the most comprehensive and ambitious approach to urban redevelopment in the nation.

Southwest's urban renewal takes on a certain degree of national significance simply given its location in the Nation's Capital. In addition, as an early pioneer and intended prototype in national urban renewal, it

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<sup>1</sup> Keith Melder, *City of Magnificent Intentions: A History of Washington, District of Columbia*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (Washington, D.C.: Intac, 1997), 525.

<sup>2</sup> District of Columbia Redevelopment Land Agency, *Annual Report*, 1959, 1.

<sup>3</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1965, 1; D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1962, 8.

<sup>4</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1961, 5.

helped test and set national standards and policy. For example, the project was the site of the historic Supreme Court case *Berman v. Parker*, which upheld the legality of eminent domain. The project was among the first to pioneer new housing practices, such as the development of the first FHA-funded housing cooperative; establishment of the first racially integrated private apartment buildings in Washington, D.C. – a legal requirement throughout the project; incorporation of design competitions into the commissioning of urban renewal structures; mixing of varied housing types – including apartment buildings and row houses – in single developments; and placement of emphasis on – and obtainment of FHA insurance for – landscape and community “amenities,” in addition to residential buildings alone.

The project also put into practice the pre-Housing Act of 1954 preference for redevelopment over rehabilitation, whereby the process of urban renewal in Southwest razed over 99 percent of the buildings in the project area.<sup>5</sup> Finally, as historian Howard Gillette has argued, “although some claim has been made for Chicago as establishing the precedent for redevelopment under largely private direction as supervised by local planning agencies, Congress’s intimate involvement in setting a policy for the District of Columbia made Washington the true test of future policy.”<sup>6</sup>

Architectural design also contributes to making Southwest’s urban renewal what author James M. Goode calls in his catalog of Washington, D.C., apartment buildings, “the most important urban renewal project in the country.”<sup>7</sup> This assessment owes its due not only to the importance of the city of Washington, D.C., but also to the employment of many Modernist architectural and planning ideals – such as the implementation of the superblock, and the attention paid to the separation of automobile and pedestrian space – in the Southwest rebuilding process. Many prominent local and national architects of the Modernist movement were also personally involved with incorporating these ideals into the design of the new Southwest. Thus, the completed sites include residential buildings by I.M. Pei, Chloethiel Woodard Smith, Charles Goodman, and Keyes, Lethbridge & Condon; Federal buildings by Edward Durrell Stone, Marcel Breuer, Herbert Beckhard, Holabird & Root, and Curtis & David; landscapes by Dan Kiley and Sasaki, Dawson & DeMay; a theater by

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<sup>5</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1962, 8.

<sup>6</sup> Howard Gillette, Jr., *Between Justice and Beauty: Race, Planning, and the Failure of Urban Policy in Washington D.C.* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 150.

<sup>7</sup> James M. Goode, *Best Addresses: A Century of Washington’s Distinguished Apartment Houses* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988), quoted in Design Research, *Southwest Survey Phase III: Historic Context Narrative, Report Submitted to D.C. Historic Preservation Office* (Washington, D.C.: n.p., [1997]), 49.

Harry Weese; and a hotel by Lapidus, Harle & Liebman. Today, the area serves as a veritable living museum of the Modernist style, offering visitors the unusual opportunity to “view such a variety of architectural solutions to essentially the same problem, constructed in such a relatively concentrated area, over such a short period of time.”<sup>8</sup>

From a global perspective, in the midst of project execution, the Redevelopment Land Agency called the Southwest “the largest peacetime reconstruction of a section of a city ever to be undertaken anywhere.”<sup>9</sup> It received international attention through the inclusion of maps and models from one of its project areas in an exhibition at the 1958 World’s Fair in Brussels.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, numerous world leaders were able to track progress in the area as the Redevelopment Land Agency and U.S. Presidents provided tours to visiting dignitaries from around the world.

Despite the national and international significance of the practices and site, as well as the prominence of the architects and planners involved, the realized New Southwest did not live up to the grand vision its developers had in mind. Consequently, today, many of the hallmark sites of the urban renewal plan – including L’Enfant Plaza, the Waterside Mall, and the waterfront – are marked for redevelopment. These plans, along with other smaller-scale developer initiatives, threaten to significantly alter, or even destroy, some of the urban renewal era buildings and sites. However, at the same time, they also offer hope of remedying some of the failures of urban renewal planning and execution and of improving the neighborhood’s shortcomings for today’s residents, workers, and visitors.

**Historian:** Francesca Russello Ammon, Summer 2004.

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<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Design Research, 48.

<sup>9</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1959, 1.

<sup>10</sup> Robert G. Howes, *Crisis Downtown: A Church Eye-view of Urban Renewal*, Public Edition (Washington, D.C.: National Conference of Catholic Charities, December 1959), Albert J. Headley, Jr. Papers, 2.

**Kress Tompkins fellowship committee, and consisted of written history and large format photographs. The documentation was produced by Francesca Russello Ammon (Yale University), winner of the Sally Kress Tompkins fellowship and the project historian, and by James Rosenthal, HABS Photographer, during the summer of 2004.**

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## I. Introduction

### Context

#### Urban Renewal

In the publication *20 Questions & Answers on Urban Renewal*, the Urban Renewal Administration (URA) of the Housing and Home Finance Agency (HHFA) defines urban renewal as “the official program of a community to improve itself through the elimination of slums and blight and the removal of the causes of slum and blighted areas, thereby preventing their recurrence.” The publication notes that urban renewal is both a public and private undertaking that has the potential to modernize an area’s physical character and remedy “poor housing, traffic congestion, inadequate sites for commercial and industrial growth, decay of downtown areas, and neighborhood deterioration.”<sup>11</sup>

While urban renewal in the United States is generally associated with the middle decades of the twentieth century, the process of urban redevelopment has been going on for as long as cities have been reinventing their urban cores. This includes many of the redevelopment efforts in European cities following the World Wars, and also the redevelopment of the old buildings of Washington, D.C.’s Federal Triangle in the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>12</sup> However, urban renewal did not become national policy in the United States until the mid-twentieth century. At that time, many American cities were experiencing similar problems, including the flight of affluent, largely white citizens to the suburbs, and the growing concentration of poor, largely black citizens in the decaying urban centers. As the middle and upper class sped out of the cities in their automobiles, they took with them the taxes and commercial expenditures that had previously gone to the urban areas. Looking to reverse this trend and nourish their bank accounts, cities turned to urban renewal as a way to entice the refugees from the upper socioeconomic group to return.

In the mid- to late-1940s, Congress passed the first pieces of legislation that would enable urban renewal in Washington, D.C. Even prior to that time, however, several non-legislative movements started the ball rolling in the Nation’s Capital toward urban renewal. Foremost among these were the movements associated with the eradication of alley dwellings and the development of war housing.

#### Alley Dwellings

As historian Howard Gillette, Jr., aptly points out, the story of Washington, D.C.’s urban renewal dates back to the early efforts to eliminate alley dwellings – the makeshift, and often unsanitary housing that sprung up in the alleys between buildings, creating slum-like conditions.

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<sup>11</sup> [United States] Urban Renewal Administration and [United States] Housing and Home Finance Agency, *20 Questions & Answers on Urban Renewal* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, February 1963), Albert J. Headley, Jr. Papers, 2.

<sup>12</sup> Melder, *City of Magnificent Intentions*, 520.

Such efforts can be traced back as long ago as 1892, when Congress allocated \$20,000 to investigate slum conditions in cities with populations over 200,000.<sup>13</sup>

John Ihlder was one of the early housing advocates in the campaign against alley dwellings. Ihlder criticized alley dwellings as unsanitary, hidden breeding grounds for anti-social practices. Moreover, in the context of increasing urban congestion, Ihlder argued that the sites of alley dwellings might be put to better use than their current low-income residential functions.<sup>14</sup>

In 1934, the Capper-Norton Alley Dwelling Bill, or the Alley Dwelling Act, was passed, creating the Washington, D.C.'s Alley Dwelling Authority (ADA). The act empowered the ADA with the ability to condemn and convert alley property for private or community use, making the group the country's first local housing authority.<sup>15</sup> In 1943, the ADA's name was changed to the National Capital Housing Authority, and its obligations expanded to include slum reclamation and low-rent housing.<sup>16</sup> No longer just a slum clearing agency, then, the Authority was also responsible for creating conditions outside of slum areas that would adequately house former slum residents.

Thus, through the growing efforts to abolish alley dwellings, the Southwest, the site of one of the major alley dwelling concentrations in Washington, D.C., began receiving the attention of planners, housing advocates, and the government.

### War Housing

Another force that influenced the alley dwelling discussion was World War II. Both before and after the United States' entry into the war, the country was building up its defenses, and a housing crisis – an impediment to production<sup>17</sup> – developed. In 1941, the Defense Housing Coordinator, Charles F. Palmer, even went so far as to call the District the nation's leading housing problem. Thus, discussions commenced regarding the development of new housing in and around the District – in Arlington, VA, and the Southeast and Southwest quadrants of Washington, D.C.<sup>18</sup> War housing was one of the responsibilities of the ADA, and so they were heavily involved in these discussions as well.<sup>19</sup>

The 1942 report, *The Rehabilitation of Southwest Washington as a War Housing Measure, A Memorandum to the Federal Home Loan Bank Board*, written by Arthur Goodwillie, in conjunction with John Ihlder, the Washington Housing Association, Howard University

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<sup>13</sup> U.S. URA and HHFA, 14.

<sup>14</sup> Gillette, 136-137.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 139.

<sup>16</sup> U.S. National Capital Park and Planning Commission (U.S. NCPPC), *Housing and Redevelopment; A Portion of the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital and its Environs* (Washington, D.C.: [U.S. Government Printing Office], 1950), 26.

<sup>17</sup> Arthur Goodwillie, *The Rehabilitation of Southwest Washington as a War Housing Measure, A Memorandum to the Federal Home Loan Bank Board* [Washington, D.C.: n.p., 1942], 2.

<sup>18</sup> Gillette, 144-145.

<sup>19</sup> U.S. NCPPC, *Housing and Redevelopment*, 26.

faculty, and the District Commissioners, laid out the case for developing war housing in Southwest. This proposal advocated building war housing in a nine-block area of the quadrant bounded by First and P streets, Maine Avenue, and the Pennsylvania Railroad tracks.<sup>20</sup> This location was deemed appropriate because of its close proximity to Federal jobs in that area, as well as the cost savings it offered through the reuse of "sound but substandard existing residential structures and public works."<sup>21</sup> In addition, such redevelopment would have the added benefit of destroying one of the city's largest slums "without direct expenditure."<sup>22</sup>

Although many black residents of Southwest opposed this proposed eviction of their neighborhood, the ultimate obstacle to prevent realization of Goodwillie's proposal was its inability to secure the necessary funding from Congress.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, the local housing data collected – and the anti-slum case it was used to construct – would endure in the continuing saga leading up to eventual redevelopment of the Southwest.

## Old Southwest

### Early History in Brief

As historian Keith Melder writes in his chapter-long history of the area, "The Southwest Washington neighborhood represents a paradox: it is at the same time one of the city's oldest and one of its newest sections."<sup>24</sup> While urban renewal makes it one of the newest District neighborhoods, its settlement in the late seventeenth century and incorporation into Washington, D.C., in 1790 make it an elder of the area.

Some of its earliest usage, dating back to the development of the L'Enfant Plan, was as a military outpost, strategically located along the Potomac River to protect the Federal city from invasions. This explains the present location of Fort Lesley J. McNair. Speculative real estate developers recognized other advantages in Southwest's location as well, viewing its proximity to the waterfront and city center as draws for residential development. James Greenleaf was foremost among these speculators,<sup>25</sup> and some of his real estate projects still survive in the neighborhood.

The African American population particularly congregated in the area, with the Southwest serving as a popular home for free blacks, as well as a major stop along the Underground Railroad. Blacks continued to populate the area after the war, inhabiting row houses in the alleys. These alley dwellings typically lacked sanitation and other basic amenities.

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<sup>20</sup> Goodwillie, 15.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>23</sup> Gillette, 145-146.

<sup>24</sup> Keith Melder, "Southwest Washington: Where History Stopped," in Kathryn Schneider Smith, Ed., *Washington at Home: An Illustrated History of the Neighborhoods in the Nation's Capital* (Northridge, CA: Windsor Publications, Inc., 1988), 65.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 66.

Despite these poor physical conditions, however, the area is said to have developed a strong sense of community that endured through the beginning of urban renewal. The next significant wave of settlers to join this community was European immigrants, who began arriving in the 1880s. While blacks and whites coexisted in the Southwest, Fourth Street (then 4 ½ Street) physically divided them.<sup>26</sup>

Melder describes the years between 1895 and 1930 as the Southwest's "golden years." During this period, the population peaked at around 35,000, community institutions thrived, and most residents were able to find gainful employment right in their home area. Following this climactic time, the population began falling, the penetration of African Americans within that population increased, and government buildings began encroaching upon the area.<sup>27</sup>

When cities across the country began trying to come to terms with white flight to the suburbs and the accompanying decline of urban populations and rise of blighted living conditions, Southwest was right in the thick of this nationwide trend. Despite a history of isolation from the rest of the city – first by the building of the Washington City Canal in 1815 (which was then filled in and today serves as Constitution Avenue), and later by the construction of railroad tracks<sup>28</sup> – the poor conditions in Southwest by the mid-twentieth century made it virtually impossible for Washingtonians and the Federal government to ignore it any longer.

### Pre-Renewal Conditions

#### *Population*

The 1950 census – the last census completed prior to Southwest's urban renewal – reported a population of 23,416 persons, or 5,974 families, living in the portion of the Southwest that would become the urban renewal area.<sup>29</sup> This level was slightly less than population reported in the 1940 census. Prior to this time period, population in the overall quadrant had been increasing.<sup>30</sup> The vast majority, or 69 percent, of this population was black, and the rest was white.<sup>31</sup> In those areas targeted for initial renewal, the concentration of black residents was even higher.

The distribution of this population with the Southwest was particularly dense. While densities varied throughout the approximately 300 acres of the 1951 survey area, they generally exceeded comfortable levels given the typical building heights of 2-3 stories. Although densities

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>28</sup> Goode, 406.

<sup>29</sup> Calculated based on sum of conditions in Area B, Area C, and Area C-1 as of 1956 boundaries; United States National Capital Planning Commission, *Urban Renewal Plan; Southwest Urban Renewal Project Area C: A Report of Existing Conditions and a Plan for Urban Renewal; Adopted on April 5, 1956 by the National Capital Planning Commission*. ([Washington, D.C.]: n.p., 1956), Appendix A3.

<sup>30</sup> United States National Capital Planning Commission, *Redevelopment Plan; Southwest Redevelopment Project, Area B; A report of Existing Conditions and a Plan for Development Adopted on October 24, 1952* (Washington, D.C.: n.p., 1952), 2.

<sup>31</sup> U.S. NCPC, *Urban Renewal Plan . . . Area C*, Appendix A3.

of 25-35 dwelling units per acre were considered reasonable maximums, very few sections had densities lower than 25 dwelling units per acre. Moreover, the four corners of the survey area exhibited densities exceeding 45 units per acre.<sup>32</sup>

While technically not representative of the entire survey area, a study of a sample of the residents who would be relocated from Southwest's largest project area yields indicators of several other demographic traits. For example, although there was a very high incidence of absentee landlords, the residents of Southwest were not a transient population: only 0.7 percent had been in the District for under a year, 82 percent had been there for more than ten years, and 65 percent had been in Southwest for more than ten years.<sup>33</sup> Some other relevant statistics are included in the table below:<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Harland Bartholomew & Associates, *Redevelopment Plans for the Southwest Survey Area in the District of Columbia; Prepared Under the Direction of the National Capital Park and Planning Commission for the District of Columbia Redevelopment Land Agency*. (St. Louis: n.p., May 1952), 3.

<sup>33</sup> Daniel Thursz, *Where Are They Now? A Study of the Impact of Relocation on Former Residents of Southwest Washington, Who Were Served in an HWC Demonstration Project* ([Washington, D.C.]: Health and Welfare Council of the National Capital Area, 1966), 19.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 21-23.

<u>Percent of Sample in July 1959</u>	
<b>Family Type:</b>	
Single, unrelated	22 percent
1 or 2 parents, plus child	54 percent
<b>Employment/Occupation:</b>	
Low Income	88 percent
Head of household employed	48 percent
Of employed head, unskilled occupation	86 percent
<b>Religion:</b>	
Head is Protestant	68 percent
Head is Catholic	14 percent
Never attend church	16 percent
<b>Education of Head:</b>	
1-6 years	41 percent
7-12 years	39 percent
Above grade 12	2 percent
<b>Health:</b>	
Head disabled	28 percent
Others disabled	15 percent
<b>Relatives:</b>	
In Southwest	28 percent
In D.C.	41 percent

### *Land Use*

The majority of the land use in the old Southwest was concentrated in streets, alleys, and residential use. The complete land use distribution – for the original 427-acre area, as well as the later extended area of approximately 600 acres (an figure which included the public housing areas) – was as follows:

	<u>427-Acre Area (1953)<sup>35</sup></u>	<u>600-Acre Area (1956)<sup>36</sup></u>
Vacant	1 percent	2 percent
Residential	31 percent	25 percent
Public and Semi-Public	9 percent	10 percent
Commercial	5 percent	5 percent
Industrial	9 percent	12 percent
Streets and Alleys	44 percent	47 percent

<sup>35</sup> U.S. NCPC, *Redevelopment Plan . . . Area B*, 3.

<sup>36</sup> U.S. NCPC, *Urban Renewal Plan . . . Area C*, 9.

This land use was generally distributed across the area as follows:

Industrial uses are found along the railroad on the northern boundary of the Survey Area, scattered along Maine Avenue, and at scattered locations in the interior of the Survey Area. Commercial uses are concentrated along Fourth Street, on Seventh Street, and along Maine Avenue. Public and semi-public uses are found here and there throughout the area.<sup>37</sup>

Numerous commercial enterprises in the area offered employment opportunities to the residents. These included wholesale food markets, restaurants, lumberyards, and the Capital Transit Company's car barns and bus repair shop. Just outside the quadrant, but still within walking distance, employment opportunities also existed in the city's central business district, Union Station, the Naval Gun Factory, and Federal offices. Overall, almost 90 percent of the employed persons in the area worked within the District of Columbia, and three-eighths worked in the Southwest or in the Northwest section, south of Florida Avenue and west of Rock Creek.<sup>38</sup>

As already discussed, Southwest was a prime target for urban renewal largely due to its substandard living conditions. These conditions provided some of the most poignant statistics for purposes of making a case for renewal. A 1951 Redevelopment Land Agency survey of the 64 blocks, or 300 acres, of the proposed Southwest Urban Renewal Area surveyed the housing conditions at the time. Based on an exterior inspection, the Agency graded structures as good, dilapidated, or obsolete. They defined these gradings as follows:

**DILAPIDATED:** A building is dilapidated because of one or more critical deficiencies, a combination of minor deficiencies, or inadequate original construction. Because of either determination or inadequate construction, dilapidated buildings are below the generally accepted minimum standard for housing and should be torn down, or extensively repaired or rebuilt.

**OBSOLESCE:** A building is obsolescent when it is not dilapidated, but it is so because of one or more of the following: (1) appears to have a useful life of less than 20 years without substantial renovation, and a number of minor deficiencies insufficient to classify the structure as dilapidated; (2) a style of architecture indicating construction prior to 1910 and no evidence of substantial renovation; (3) obvious defects in layout resulting in a lack of light and air and inadequate living space. Obsolescent buildings must be surveyed individually to determine whether they should be retained or eliminated in the redevelopment plan.

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<sup>37</sup> Harland Bartholomew & Associates, 4.

<sup>38</sup> U.S. NCPC, *Redevelopment Plan . . . Area B*, 9.



**GOOD:** A building is good when it is sound in all respects and is neither dilapidated or [sic] obsolescent. Good buildings would be retained in the redevelopment site plan.<sup>39</sup>

In their survey, they determined that, of the 3,370 buildings in the area, only 4 percent were in good condition, while 40 percent were obsolescent and 56 percent were blighted. 87 percent of the buildings in the survey area were residential, with an average of 4.75 persons living in each dwelling unit.<sup>40</sup> These buildings were generally more than a half-century-old, constructed of brick, and consisted of two stories, with first floors at grade and no basements. Although designed as single-family homes, many now accommodated multiple households.<sup>41</sup> The alley dwellings were also constructed of brick, but were smaller than the street-front dwellings.<sup>42</sup>

A later survey by the RLA further classified the dwellings in the subsection of the area that would be designated as the first urban renewal parcel – Project Area B. Of the area's approximately 1,000 residential structures, they classified 80 percent as substandard. (According to the American Public Health Association's Housing Appraisal Technique, upon which this survey was based, structures should be replaced when more than half of a block's dwelling units are substandard.<sup>43</sup>) More specifically, they found that 58 percent of the dwelling units' toilets were located outside the building (and only 31 percent had toilets inside the dwelling unit), 60 percent had no baths, 31 percent had no indoor running water (only approximately half of those with indoor supplies had hot water), 29 percent were without electricity,<sup>44</sup> and 84 percent had no central heating.<sup>45</sup> While Area B's conditions were particularly extreme, they were indicative of the general level of living conditions in the entirety of Southwest.

Arthur Goodwillie's 1942 survey of the general Southwest area as a potential war housing location offered less quantitative, but equally telling, description:

Inside bathrooms, kitchen sinks, central heating and electric lights are luxuries of extreme rarity. Many rooms lack adequate sunlight. With few exceptions, sanitary facilities are installed in the back yard, close to the hydrant from which a dozen families draw their domestic water supply. Service alleys are often littered with garbage and other waste. Interspersed among these brick dwellings is a considerable number of older frame houses. The latter are in a lamentable state of repair, dangerous, unhealthful, vermin and rat infested. They constitute a serious fire, safety and health hazard and should be demolished, as a slum clearance measure, at an early date.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1951, 9.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>41</sup> U.S. NCPC, *Redevelopment Plan . . . Area B*, 7.

<sup>42</sup> Harland Bartholomew & Associates, 3.

<sup>43</sup> U.S. NCPC, *Redevelopment Plan . . . Area B*, 7.

<sup>44</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1952, 13.

<sup>45</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1953, v.

<sup>46</sup> Goodwillie, 10.

The majority of the Southwest urban renewal area's units, or 87 percent, were tenant-occupied.<sup>47</sup> Generally speaking, those structures in the worst conditions tended to be tenant-occupied. The owners had little incentive to maintain the structures either given that the mortgage structure of the buildings' sales led to many maintaining only a very small level of equity in their property.

On the flip side, as the statistics also indicated, certain pockets of the Southwest included adequate housing. These were largely concentrated in the southeast corner of the area and took the form of public housing and some relatively new flats and apartment buildings.<sup>48</sup>

### **Rationale for Urban Renewal in Southwest**

A lengthy list has been posed of potential reasons behind the decision to redevelop the Southwest. These range from charges of racist attitudes toward the predominantly black population of the area, to a more academic and architectural desire to practice the ideals of Modernism in the United States. However, as with much real estate development, one of the most significant stimuli was the economic rationale. In addition, more symbolic justifications related to the neighborhood's juxtaposition with the Capitol Building also played a key role.

### **Symbolism of the Capital**

Washington, D.C., plays a very important and symbolic role in the United States. In many ways, it is the public face of the nation – a city visited by many foreign dignitaries, and a shared hometown for all Americans. Thus, the city's visual and functional excellence takes on greater importance than they would in a more typical city.

The National Capital Parks and Planning Commission's (NCPPC) *Comprehensive Plan* of 1950 confirmed this role in its volume *Housing and Redevelopment*. The authors wrote:

As the National Capital, Washington must shelter its inhabitants satisfactorily and conveniently as well as accommodate working places for its people and furnish a suitable setting for the seat of government. The manner in which these separate functions are performed is the city's measure of success as a metropolis. A condition wherein people are ill-housed is not fitting to the character of the city that is this Nation's Capital.<sup>49</sup>

President Harry S. Truman echoed this sentiment in his endorsement of the Plan, noting that Washington, D.C., "should be the best planned city in the world and a Capital befitting the dignity and ideals of a great nation in a family of nations."<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1954, 11.

<sup>48</sup> U.S. NCPC, *Redevelopment Plan . . . Area B*, 7.

<sup>49</sup> U.S. NCPPC, *Housing and Redevelopment*, 2.

<sup>50</sup> U.S. NCPPC, *Washington Present and Future; A General Summary of the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital and its Environs* (Washington, D.C.: [U.S. Govt. Print. Off.], 1950), 2.

Others broadened this attitude beyond housing alone to encompass all of the architecture of the city. In a special issue of the *A.I.A. Journal* devoted to the architecture and planning of Washington, President John F. Kennedy wrote:

A nation's capital should embody the finest in its contemporary architectural thought. Its architectural form should reflect the dignity, enterprise, vigor and stability of our national government. In these objectives both public agencies and private builders will need the services of the nation's leading architects.<sup>51</sup>

In that same issue, Henry L. Wright further elaborated:

Washington is the face of America. The architecture of its educational institutions, hospitals, churches and commercial enterprises cannot be expected to do less than express the best we have to offer . . . Slums and substandard structures are blemishes that must be eradicated if Washington is to stand as the seat of a government that has won and must maintain the regard and respect of every member of the family of nations.<sup>52</sup>

With the slums of Southwest located only blocks away from one of that city's grand monuments – the Capitol Building – the majestic image of Washington, D.C., was compromised. Many Congressmen were given tours of the area to see the poverty and deprivation of their neighbor first hand, and others were able to envision the conditions based upon poignant photographs that pictured the Capitol Dome in the background of an alley dwelling scene. Thus, the incongruity of this juxtaposition was cemented, and the rise in public and media attention on the city, in accompaniment with the city's Sesquicentennial celebration in 1950, only further disseminated that disconnect.

The desire to improve Washington, D.C., was further consistent with an urban clean-up trend in various parts of the world at that time. As after previous wars, the end of World War II provided an ideal opportunity to improve the city. Having been ravaged by an influx of war-time workers and their associated temporary quarters and employment facilities, Washington, D.C., was ripe for renewal, just as it had been following other conflicts, like the Civil War. Thus, similar to many European cities during this time period, Washington, D.C., set to work in repairing its infrastructure and appearance.<sup>53</sup>

Beyond being the public face of the country, Washington, D.C., was also viewed as an appropriate pilot case for demonstrating the potential of large-scale urban renewal for all blighted cities in the nation. As President Kennedy wrote, "The expanding partnership between the Federal government and our cities finds common ground in these ideals and much of our effort is devoted to giving them expression. As our Capital City, Washington should lead in this

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<sup>51</sup> John F. Kennedy, "A Message from the President," *Washington in Transition*, (Washington, D.C.: *A.I.A. Journal* 39, January 1963), 25.

<sup>52</sup> Henry L. Wright, "The Architect and Washington," *Washington in Transition*, 24.

<sup>53</sup> "Blueprint for a Greater Washington," *New York Times*, 9 June 1946, quoted in *Design Research*, 10.

important work.”<sup>54</sup> Albert Cole, Administrator of the HHFA, also called Southwest’s urban renewal “a signpost and symbol for the rest of the country.”<sup>55</sup>

Not only was the city symbolically suited to leading the charge, but it also was equipped with many of the necessary tools to best facilitate its success in “the war on blight.” As the city’s urban renewal consultant, James W. Rouse, noted, these tools included “an outstanding board of commissioners, a cooperative spirit among city department heads, good basic laws with progress being made on weak spots, a top-notch planning commission, and an established long-range public works program.”<sup>56</sup>

Within Washington, D.C., the Southwest area was particularly appropriate for urban renewal given its proximity to the Capitol and its level of deterioration. In addition, it was also well suited given its defined boundaries, its relatively large size – large enough to discourage organized opposition – and high concentration of poor, black residents, whose voices could be ignored.

### Economic Case

In the mid-twentieth century, the combined growth of interstate highways and affordable, private suburban housing contributed to a move out of the cities and into the suburbs across the country. Thus, formerly vibrant downtown areas were emptying, and cities were losing out on tax revenues as their former residents and visitors fled to the hinterlands. This national trend affected the District of Columbia as well, and the city looked to urban renewal as an opportunity to reverse this movement and rejuvenate the urban core.

Southwest offered a particularly attractive site for this type of urban renewal as its location – right next to the Capitol and the central business district on the north and the waterfront on the south – could be highly desirable to would-be suburban commuters. Moreover, the current value of this land was considerably lower than that of other close-in areas of the city,<sup>57</sup> making the potential economic increment even greater.

As policy scholar Martin Anderson notes in his analysis of the Federal urban renewal program, the promise of increased tax revenue has been one of the greatest motivators of urban renewal activity in the United States.<sup>58</sup> Since the Federal government subsidized two-thirds of the cost of the project, proponents of urban renewal argued that, in order to break even, the increased taxes would only have to cover the one-third share of the financing for which the local district was responsible. Anything beyond that would be profit. In Southwest, the RLA reported

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<sup>54</sup> Kennedy, 25.

<sup>55</sup> “Project to Erase Washington Slum.” *New York Times*, 8 January 1957, quoted in Design Research, 10-11.

<sup>56</sup> Robert C. Albrook, “Expert Tells of Weapons in Slum War,” *Washington Post*, 20 October 1954.

<sup>57</sup> U.S. NCPC, *Redevelopment Plan . . . Area B*, 9.

<sup>58</sup> Martin Anderson, *The Federal Bulldozer: A Critical Analysis of Urban Renewal, 1949-1962* (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, [1964]), 9.

in its 1961 annual report that this breakeven would occur in less than six years.<sup>59</sup> It further held that "the ultimate tax return from this Area, after equalizing assessments and tax rates, is expected to exceed five times the revenue received prior to its renewal."<sup>60</sup> By 1971, for example, in comparison to the area's \$592,016 tax intake in 1953,<sup>61</sup> the year prior to the start of urban renewal activity, the area contributed \$3,887,000 to the tax register.<sup>62</sup>

While annual tax streams certainly increased, however, Anderson argues that the more accurate economic calculation should also take into account the time value of money, lost revenue from the period when the land was barren, redevelopment costs, and any natural improvements in the value of the property in order to arrive at the true economic benefit or loss.<sup>63</sup> In addition, he contends that urban renewal is unlikely to contribute little more than a slight net increase in a city's economics given that experts estimate that more than half of urban renewal buildings would have been built elsewhere in the city anyway.<sup>64</sup>

In rebuttal, it can perhaps be argued that Washington, D.C., is in a somewhat unique position as the Nation's Capital. As the RLA noted in its 1961 annual report, "The city's boundaries are limited by law and much of the area of the city is occupied by Federal buildings and land and by private tax-exempt organizations. Redevelopment offers one of the best methods for enhancing the value of the taxable property in the city."<sup>65</sup>

Proponents of urban renewal argued that the current inhabitants of Southwest also contributed to an imbalance in terms of tax intake versus service expenses such that the area produced "only 1.2 cents of every D.C. tax dollar, but [consumed] at least 34 cents of every dollar spent for welfare, health, mental patients and incarceration of criminals."<sup>66</sup> While Anderson does not debate such statistics, he contests that the implied implications are in error, given that simply moving people from one neighborhood to another does not necessarily change their behavior, nor does it diminish the number of police and fire workers on the city payroll.<sup>67</sup> No comprehensive study has been conducted in the Southwest to determine if any net change in service costs was achieved.

Another economic rationale noted by the RLA was the boost to the economy offered by construction wages and equipment. In Southwest, the RLA estimated the total economic boost, including incremental taxes, at \$450 million. At a point in time – in 1961, for example – this included the economic impact of 1,156 construction workers, earning a collective \$156,600

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<sup>59</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1961, 13.

<sup>60</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1967, 3.

<sup>61</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1970, 27.

<sup>62</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1971, 20.

<sup>63</sup> Anderson, 170-171.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>65</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1961, 13.

<sup>66</sup> Federal City Council (FCC), Washington, D.C. Press Release, "News from ... Federal City Council," 14 May 1956, Albert J. Headley, Jr. Papers, 0.

<sup>67</sup> Anderson, 169-170.

weekly pay.<sup>68</sup> Still, in his more general study, Anderson minimized the magnitude of such benefits, noting that, between 1950 and 1960, urban renewal accounted for only approximately 1.3 percent of all construction activity in American cities.<sup>69</sup>

Federal investment in urban renewal has also been shown to significantly spur private investment as well. The Urban Renewal Administration determined that such private investment was on the order of four times the amount of Federal spending.<sup>70</sup>

Finally, beyond economics alone, the influx of more affluent residents to Southwest was also expected to enrich the city culturally and civically through their expanded involvement in the overall city.<sup>71</sup>

## II. Redevelopment Policy, People, and Plans

### Policies

Despite the fact that the idea of urban redevelopment had been in discussion for decades, if not centuries, it was not until the 1940s that the passage of several influential pieces of legislation would enable the public-private activity that would make large urban renewal projects possible.

#### D.C. Redevelopment Act of 1945

The first of these pieces of legislation was the District of Columbia Redevelopment Act of 1945. The 79<sup>th</sup> Congress passed this legislation as Public Law 592 on August 2, 1946.<sup>72</sup> The purpose of the act was:

To provide for the replanning and rebuilding of slum, blighted, and other areas of the District of Columbia and the assembly, by purchase or condemnation, of real property in such areas and the sale or lease thereof for the redevelopment of such area in accordance with said plans; and to provide for the organization of, procedure for, and the financing of such planning, acquisition, and sale or lease; and for other purposes.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1961, 1, 14.

<sup>69</sup> Anderson, 10.

<sup>70</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1961, 14.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>72</sup> U.S. Congress, *District of Columbia Redevelopment Act*, 1945, 1; D.C. RLA, 'This is RLA' ([Washington, D.C.]: n.p., [1975?], 1.

<sup>73</sup> U.S. Congress, *District of Columbia Redevelopment Act*, 1945, 1.

The act further stipulated that, as regulatory processes had proven inadequate and private enterprise alone would not be able to remedy the situation, it was necessary for public participation in the planning and financing of a comprehensive redevelopment solution.<sup>74</sup>

Through this act, Congress also established the Redevelopment Land Agency (RLA), the organization that would conduct these replanning and rebuilding activities, and it set aside a \$20 million trust to support the Agency's redevelopment activities. As for the Agency's activities – redevelopment – the act defined the process as:

Replanning, clearance, redesign, and rebuilding of project areas, including open-space types of uses, such as streets, recreation and other public grounds, and spaces around buildings, as well as buildings, structures, and improvements, but not excluding the continuance of some of the existing buildings or uses in a project area.<sup>75</sup>

#### Housing Act of 1949

The Housing Act of 1949 was the second of the two major pieces of legislation that empowered the D.C. RLA in its mission to redevelop blighted areas in Washington, D.C. Passed as Public Law 171 on July 15, 1949, this national act led to an amendment to the D.C. Redevelopment Act of 1945 to allow the District to take advantage of the Title I program that the 1949 act enacted.

The act established a Federal program of loans and grant for Redevelopment. This created an additional funding source for the RLA to significantly supplement its initial trust fund from Congress.<sup>76</sup> These funds could be used:

for the planning and surveying of projects, temporary loans to finance land acquisition and other project activities, and Federal capital grants to meet 2/3 of the net cost of making land in redevelopment areas available for development at fair value for uses in accordance with the redevelopment plan.<sup>77</sup>

#### Housing Act of 1954

The Housing Act of 1954, another national provision, contributed to further amendment of the D.C. Redevelopment Act of 1945. This act supplemented the existing Federal aid for clearance and redevelopment with additional support “for planning and carrying out rehabilitation of deteriorated structures and conservation of existing good neighborhoods.”<sup>78</sup> In this regard, the act was based largely on the Baltimore Plan of 1951-1953, which advised

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>76</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1952, v.

<sup>77</sup> Federal City Council, Washington, D.C. *Urban Renewal Program in the District of Columbia: Report and Recommendations to the Committee on the District of Columbia of the House of Representatives* ([Washington, D.C.]: The Council, 1961), 25.

<sup>78</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1955, 6.

property owners on how to halt property deterioration.<sup>79</sup> Thanks to this Act, mass demolition was no longer the sole mechanism for Federally funded urban renewal; rather, selected rehabilitation would also be supported. By the time this legislation was passed, however, most of the plans for Southwest were well on their way, and the opportunity to pursue rehabilitation of the area was missed.

In order to receive Federal funds, the act required that communities develop a “workable program” for slum and blight eradication.<sup>80</sup> Such a program is basically a roadmap for redeveloping an area in a comprehensive and coordinate manner. Through the program, a community would survey its area’s problems, log what had already been done, determine what remained to be done, and prioritize when and how the necessary next steps would be taken. James Rouse’s and Nathaniel Keith’s *No Slums in Ten Years* established the framework for Washington D.C.’s “workable program,” which was approved in June 1955.<sup>81</sup>

Supreme Court Case: *Berman v. Parker*

During the same year as the passage of that latest Housing Act, a decision was also reached on a major legal matter standing in the way of the pursuit of Southwest’s urban renewal as planned. This legal decision would have monumental ramifications for redevelopment of the Southwest, as well as parcels of land around the country, continuing through the present day.

In December 1952, two owners of commercial property (a department store and a hardware store) in the 700 block of Fourth Street – part of the first Southwest redevelopment area, Project Area B – took the RLA to the District of Columbia Circuit Court to challenge the constitutionality of the Agency’s property acquisition practices. Their lawyers had three main arguments: (1) as the Redevelopment Act of 1945 had not defined the term “blight,” the RLA could not apply that ambiguous term to all of Project Area B, (2) the property being seized would go to private (i.e., developer) use, rather than “public use,” and (3) as the 1945 Act was primarily a housing law, it could not be applied to commercial property.<sup>82</sup>

The case eventually reached the Supreme Court and, in December 1954, the court unanimously affirmed the Agency’s right to acquire property in a blighted area in order to comprehensively redevelop the area according to an urban renewal plan.<sup>83</sup> In his decision, Justice William O. Douglas wrote:

The concept of the public welfare is broad and inclusive ... the values it represents are spiritual as well as physical, aesthetic as well as monetary. It is within the power of the legislature to determine that the community should be beautiful as well as healthy,

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<sup>79</sup> Elaine B. Todd, *Urban Renewal in the Nation’s Capital: A History of the Redevelopment Land Agency in Washington, D.C., 1946-1973*, Ph.D. Dissertation, Howard University, Washington, D.C., December 1986, 158-160.

<sup>80</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1955, 6.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> George Beveridge, “Southwest Court Fight – Complicated Issues in Redevelopment of Area B Await Decision of Special Three-Judge Bench,” *Evening Star* (Washington, D.C.), September 1954.

<sup>83</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1961. 4.



spacious as well as clean, well-balanced as well as carefully patrolled . . . If those who govern the D. of C. decide that the Nation's Capital should be beautiful as well as sanitary, there is nothing in the Fifth Amendment that stands in the way.<sup>84</sup>

### **Organizations Involved**

Numerous groups participated in Southwest's urban renewal, with the number of players exceeding otherwise typical levels given the unique situation of Washington's oversight by local as well as Federal leaders.

#### **Redevelopment Land Agency (RLA)**

The RLA was the public agency that was tasked by the D.C. Redevelopment Act of 1945 with carrying out urban renewal in Washington, D.C. In the words of the RLA itself, the Agency's purpose was "the ultimate end of urban decay through redevelopment and the prevention, reduction or elimination of the causes of urban blight." Its long-range goal, in the words of the Housing Act of 1949, is to see every District resident enjoy "a decent home and suitable environment."<sup>85</sup> The group was legally accountable to the U.S. Congress until July 1974, when it fell under the jurisdiction of the Mayor and City Council of the District of Columbia.<sup>86</sup> In 2001, it moved under the jurisdiction of the National Capital Revitalization Corporation (NCRC) and was renamed the RLA Revitalization Corporation (RLARC).

The work of the RLA during Southwest's urban renewal consisted of 4 major steps: land acquisition, relocation of families and businesses, demolition and site preparation, and the sale, lease, or transfer of cleared land.<sup>87</sup>

In the first step, land acquisition, the RLA bought land by either negotiation or eminent domain. Typical property acquisition costs in Southwest ranged between \$3,500 and \$9,000 per parcel.<sup>88</sup>

In the second step, relocation, the RLA was responsible for finding decent, affordable replacement housing for all displaced families, with the aim of bettering their situation. In Southwest, no family was evicted during the process of relocation.<sup>89</sup> For businesses, the process was less rigid, and the RLA helped out as possible in identifying potential alternative sites for displaced businesses, although no replacement site was guaranteed. The relocation process will be discussed at greater length in a later section of this report.

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<sup>84</sup> D.C. RLA, *'This is RLA'*, 4.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1959, 4; D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1961.

<sup>88</sup> Phil A. Doyle, "RLA Reports on: Rebirth of Southwest D.C.," *National Capital Area Realtor* 30:8 (August 1962): 6.

<sup>89</sup> Jim Banks, Group Interview by author, River Park, SW, Washington, D.C., June 24, 2004.

Step three, the process of demolition and site preparation, can also be thought of as two separate activities. First, as per the urban renewal plan, the RLA demolished the appropriate structures in order to clear the site for future development. In Southwest, demolition was vast, and most of the activity occurred between 1954 and 1958.<sup>90</sup> The second sub-step, the process of site preparation, was focused on numerous infrastructural activities. Streets were closed, opened, and paved, lots were resized, and systems of sewers, lighting, and sidewalks were put in place in advance of public or private rebuilding.<sup>91</sup>

Finally, in step four, the cleared and prepared land was sold or leased to a public or private developer.

Between the 1946 creation of the RLA and the Agency's commencement of operations in 1951 (and the even later pursuit of the first of the above activities, beginning in 1953), many intermediate events took place. In March 1947, the President of the United States appointed two members of the Board of Directors, and the D.C. Commissioners named the other three.<sup>92</sup> In July of that year, Congress appropriated \$75,000 for development of a comprehensive plan for Washington, D.C., and a redevelopment plan for the proposed first redevelopment area, Marshall Heights, located in Southeast.<sup>93</sup> This was the first of two steps that needed to be taken before the RLA could commence redevelopment activities in an area. The second of these steps was the approval of redevelopment boundaries. The NCPPC would shortly take both of these steps (to be discussed later) in order to move urban renewal into the execution stage.

In February 1948, the RLA requested \$3.4 million of its \$20 million trust to support redevelopment plans for Marshall Heights. However, although the Marshall Heights plan was eventually approved, Congress later terminated the project.<sup>94</sup> Thus, no funds were received. In fact, the RLA did not receive its first funding until a June 1950 appropriation of \$8,000 for administrative expenses. During the period prior to this, the RLA had been operating out of office space donated by its first Board Chairman, Mark Lansburgh, at his family's Seventh Street, NW, department store.

In August 1950, the RLA requested approximately \$170,000 from Congress to fund advance redevelopment planning, the hiring of staff, and the opening of an office. The Agency received those funds in January 1951.<sup>95</sup> Also in that month, the Board of Directors appointed John R. Searles, Jr., as the RLA's first Executive Director.<sup>96</sup> The Federal City Council, a private organization representing downtown businesses, has termed this moment the "effective date for the commencement of urban redevelopment and renewal activities in the District of Columbia."<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Design Research, 21.

<sup>91</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1959, 4.

<sup>92</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1951, 2.

<sup>93</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1952, v.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, v-vi.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, vi; D.C. RLA, *'This is RLA'*, 1.

<sup>96</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1951, 3.

<sup>97</sup> FCC, Washington, D.C., *Urban Renewal Program in the District of Columbia*, 26.

### National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC)

The National Capital Planning Commission is the planning organization for the metropolitan District of Columbia area, and it is responsible for developing and maintaining a master plan for the region. Before the RLA could take any action to acquire land for redevelopment, the NCPC first had to develop and approve a redevelopment plan. Further, when any changes were proposed to the plan, the NCPC had to amend the plan in order to ensure consistency with the planned redevelopment.

The history of the NCPC dates back to the parks movement. On June 6, 1924, an act of Congress created the National Capital Park Commission "to provide for the comprehensive systematic and continuous development of the park, parkway and playground system of the National Capital."<sup>98</sup> On April 30, 1926, Congress abolished the Highway Commission and expanded the functional scope of the Park Commission (now renamed the National Capital Park and Planning Commission (NCPPC)) to include comprehensive planning for transportation, parks, housing, community facilities, zoning, and the other elements of city and regional planning for the District of Columbia.<sup>99</sup> Finally, the passage of the National Capital Planning Act on July 19, 1952, renamed the Commission as the National Capital Planning Commission and expanded its geographic scope outside of the District to include the adjoining areas of Maryland and Virginia as well.<sup>100</sup>

As shall be discussed in the later section on redevelopment plans, the NCPC, in its former incarnation as the NCPPC, developed the 1950 comprehensive plan for Washington, D.C., which highlighted Southwest as a blighted area in need of redevelopment. Later, the NCPC was also responsible for preparing and approving redevelopment plans for the overall area, as well as for its individual project areas.

### Commissioners of the District of Columbia

The Commissioners of the District of Columbia, also known as the District Commissioners, or the D.C. Commissioners, was the one other body that stood in the way of the RLA's execution of redevelopment. Following approval of a redevelopment plan by the NCPC, the District Commissioners held a public hearing on the plan in order to obtain public consensus on the proposed activities and acceptable answers to specific objections.<sup>101</sup> As part of their review of the plan, the Commissioners were to ensure that adequate rehousing was being provided for displaced low-income families.<sup>102</sup> Once this body approved the plan – within the 30-day review period – it was "certified to the Land Agency for execution."<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> [United States] National Capital Planning Commission and [United States] National Capital Regional Planning Council, *Information Bulletin on National Capital Planning*, [1960], Albert J. Headley, Jr. Papers, 4.

<sup>99</sup> U.S. NCPC and U.S. NCRP, 5.

<sup>100</sup> Melder, *City of Magnificent Intentions*, 517; U.S. NCPC and U.S. NCRP, 7.

<sup>101</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1959, 4, 13.

<sup>102</sup> U.S. NCPPC, *Redevelopment and Housing*, 31.

<sup>103</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1959, 4, 13.

### Housing and Home Finance Agency (HHFA)

The next major public organization involved in redevelopment was the HHFA. This group was a predecessor to the current Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and handled the Federal financing aspect of each urban renewal project.

The functions of the HHFA are best explained through description of its constituent organizations. The first of these groups, the Urban Renewal Administration (URA), administered the making of Federal loans and grants to the RLA for urban renewal activities, such as planning. The District had to match at least half of the Federal contribution. In the case of Southwest, this matching contribution came from infrastructural improvements to the renewal area, such as highways and schools.<sup>104</sup> In addition, the URA also provided technical assistance to ensure that local decisions were following the appropriate laws.<sup>105</sup> The second group, the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), insured urban renewal-related mortgages in order to stimulate private investment.<sup>106</sup>

### National Capital Housing Authority

The National Capital Housing Authority (NCHA) developed and operated public housing. While no public housing was included in the Southwest Urban Renewal Area, adjacent and nearby public housing served as a relocation destination for many of the former residents of the Southwest Urban Renewal Area.<sup>107</sup> Thus, the NCHA was an indispensable partner to the RLA in their work. Prior to 1943, the NCHA was known as the Alley Dwelling Authority.

### **Plans and Progress**

While a case can be made that the history of Southwest's urban renewal dates back to the conditions that originated in its early days, this history takes as its starting point the Redevelopment Act of 1945, which first set the wheels of urban renewal into motion. The ramifications of that Act, as well as the early history of the Redevelopment Land Agency that it created, have already been discussed above. This section of the report will discuss the major plans that bridged urban renewal from the intentions of that early Act to the enactment of redevelopment "progress."

The specific plans that are discussed include the 1950 NCPPC Comprehensive Plan, various land use proposals for the entire urban renewal area, and the developer-sponsored redevelopment plans for the individual project areas.

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<sup>104</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1959, 4.

<sup>105</sup> U.S. URA and U.S. HHFA, 5.

<sup>106</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1959, 4.

<sup>107</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1959, 4.

### 1950 NCPPC Comprehensive Plan

In July 1947, Congress appropriated \$75,000 for the National Capital Park and Planning Commission to prepare a general plan for Washington, as well as project-specific redevelopment plans. By February 1948, the NCPPC had completed a general land use plan,<sup>108</sup> although it was not published in its five-monograph format until 1950. In an introductory letter in the first monograph, NCPPC chairman William W. Wurster outlined the intentions of the plan:

It is the Commission's hope that the comprehensive plan will be the guide not only for new growth throughout the National Capital metropolitan region, but also for the redevelopment of the blighted areas of the central city. Our democracy should not tolerate existing conditions.<sup>109</sup>

In that same monograph, the NCPPC discussed redevelopment – a topic to which, along with housing, it would devote an entire monograph. It defined redevelopment in the following way:

Redevelopment is the new tool for obtaining a new land-use pattern. By this form of action, more than mere protection through zoning or guidance through subdivision control can be applied to achieve land use, circulation, and housing goals. Redevelopment areas are the places where the public, through government, must go into partnership with private enterprise, in order to make our Capital a city that meets the American standard of living.<sup>110</sup>

The NCPPC viewed redevelopment as more than a housing measure alone, but as a way to rebuild obsolete areas of the city, and as a means to achieve social and economic benefits, primarily through private enterprise.<sup>111</sup> It forecast that such a major undertaking for the whole of Washington, D.C., would take thirty years to complete.<sup>112</sup> Incidentally, a report published five years later by Rouse and Keith would trim that time period down to ten years. In reality, however, redevelopment will likely go on indefinitely.

Beyond definition alone, however, the Comprehensive Plan also made specific suggestions regarding how to proceed with this redevelopment process. For example, it recommended that the RLA be provided with the necessary funds to begin to take action. It also made general recommendations about particular redevelopment areas, highlighting three possibilities, and concluding, "It is likely that further studies will prove the Southwest as offering the most favorable possibilities for a pilot project."<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1952, v.

<sup>109</sup> U.S. NCPPC, *Washington Present and Future*, 0.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*; U.S. NCPPC, *Housing and Redevelopment*, 27.

<sup>112</sup> U.S. NCPPC, *Washington Present and Future*, 23.

<sup>113</sup> U.S. NCPPC, *Housing and Redevelopment*, 33.

In identifying problem areas, the plan employed six criteria: overcrowding, lack of repairs, lack of sanitation, age of buildings, insufficient open space, low rents, and juvenile delinquency and disease. It reasoned, "When combinations of these factors reappear as high percentages of dwelling units within the same statistical areas, the Planning Commission can justify designation of squares so represented as being problem areas."<sup>114</sup>

In addition to operating in areas that met these criteria, the plan also specified several other requirements of redevelopment. First, the plan specified that it must proceed on a neighborhood basis, rather than building by building (although the neighborhood plan can be broken up into specific project plans). Second, it held that the selected neighborhood had to be large enough to maintain itself. As a rule of thumb, it offered, "Ordinarily, this includes an area with a population tributary to an elementary school." A final requirement specified by the plan was that the redevelopment area should have "definite and recognizable boundaries, such as major streets or other barriers."<sup>115</sup>

Based upon all of these principles, the Plan identified Marshall Heights, Barry Farms, and the Southwest as potential redevelopment areas. The NCPPC also developed a project plan for Marshall Heights and, in accordance with the Commission's recommendation of starting redevelopment with outside areas before moving on to the central slum areas, the RLA requested funds for both Marshall Heights and Barry Farms. (Public outcry would eventually terminate both projects before funding was ever even appropriated by Congress). In addition, the report also included an example of how the Southwest could be redeveloped.

This Southwest proposal, based on a January 1942 study of the area by the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC), looked at a 35-acre, 9-block area between Delaware Avenue and Eye, Fourth, and E streets. It suggested rehabilitating several structures, increasing open space, closing some blocks in order to create superblocks, and building new housing facing the open space.<sup>116</sup>

### Selecting a Redevelopment Area

Even after the publication of the Comprehensive Plan, the selection of Washington D.C.'s first urban renewal area was still uncertain. Thus, in January 1951, the RLA contracted with the HHFA for advance planning of three areas: 600 acres in Northwest, 427 acres in Southwest, and 350 acres in Southeast. In March, the RLA provided funds to the Planning Commission for redevelopment planning in those three areas.<sup>117</sup>

Back in January, the Southwest redevelopment area was defined as the area "bounded by Virginia Ave on the north, Seventh St on the west, James Creek Parkway on the east, and P Street on the south."<sup>118</sup> By March, these boundaries were extended in order to incorporate

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 27-28.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>117</sup> U.S. NCPC, *Redevelopment Plan . . . Area B*, 1; D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1952, 1.

<sup>118</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1951, 5.

additional adjacent blighted areas, as well as to account for the planned location of the Southwest Expressway.<sup>119</sup> Finally, in June, five tentative project areas in Southwest were identified and adopted by the Planning Commission and, in October, the RLA applied to the HHFA for funds to support final redevelopment planning for the first project area in Southwest.<sup>120</sup>

### Southwest Land Use Plans

Prior to the commencement of redevelopment activities in Southwest, a series of diverse land use proposals were considered as road maps for planning the new Southwest. The most radical of these were the conservative Peets Plan and the more radical Justement-Smith Plan. The plan that was eventually approved, following the development and consideration of a series of compromise plans, incorporated elements of each of those two extreme plans – although the Justement-Smith Plan ultimately proved more influential in shaping the character of the redeveloped neighborhood.

#### *Peets Plan*

In 1951, the NCPPC commissioned Elbert Peets, a Planning Commission staff member and eminent historian of the L'Enfant Plan, to develop an urban renewal plan for Southwest. Generally speaking, his completed plan advocated upgrading the current Southwest by gradually rehabilitating its buildings while maintaining its street grid and socioeconomic character. Peets recognized the historic character of the area's buildings and trees and proposed that these, along with the L'Enfant Plan, should be changed as little as possible, while simultaneously improving conditions for its residents.<sup>121</sup> In the words of John R. Searles, Jr., the RLA's first executive director, "[Peets] believed that the basic dark red brick texture of the area was priceless and could never be reproduced."<sup>122</sup> Geographically speaking, the plan sought to redevelop 178 acres of Southwest, while leaving untouched the land west of Tenth Street, the Maine Avenue frontage north of N Street, the commercial frontage on Fourth and Seventh streets, and housing in the southeast.<sup>123</sup>

Peets' rehabilitation-oriented approach was supported by previous conclusions reached in Arthur Goodwillie's assessment of the area as a potential site for war housing. In his earlier plan, after noting the many poor conditions of an 85-square portion of Southwest, Goodwillie then proceeded to point out its numerous assets, which could serve as a useful base for rehabilitation:

The streets are wide and well shaded. Water, light and sewer mains, sidewalks and pavements are in place, paid for and well maintained. Side by side with decrepit frame

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<sup>119</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1952, 1-2.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, vi.

<sup>121</sup> U.S. NCPD and Frederick Gutheim, *Worthy of the Nation: The History of Planning for the National Capital* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1977), 314.

<sup>122</sup> Quoted in Goode, 407.

<sup>123</sup> Harland Bartholomew & Associates, 21.

structures are some 2900 substandard but basically sound brick buildings, usually in rows, virtually all of which can be saved and are well worth saving.<sup>124</sup>

This same philosophy permeated the Peets Plan as well.

Residentially, Peets argued that the location and character of the Southwest was well suited for low-income residents, and so most of the current residences should remain.<sup>125</sup> Of these, 400 living units would be rehabilitated, while 300 would remain as they were. In terms of new housing, Peets proposed the construction of elevator apartments in the southeast corner of the area, near Fort McNair and the waterfront, as well as low-rent housing in the northeast corner.<sup>126</sup> Where new row houses and small apartment buildings were also deemed necessary, they would be woven into the existing fabric and oriented towards gardens that were to be created by closing some minor streets.<sup>127</sup> Also notable was Peets' introduction of housing to the area north of the proposed expressway.<sup>128</sup>

In the Peets plan, most community facilities would be retained, but expanded. Thus, playground areas would be increased at existing schools, and two new schools would be added. Churches and other facilities would remain as well.<sup>129</sup>

Peets did not propose many changes to the existing first commercial facilities in Southwest, including the areas along Fourth and Seventh streets and Maine Avenue. In terms of second commercial, however, he suggested a significant increase in land area, particularly in the northern portion of the neighborhood, as well as along the waterfront.<sup>130</sup>

Harland Bartholomew, an esteemed St. Louis planner, was hired by the NCPC to conduct a thorough review of the Peets Plan, which he ultimately described as "basically conservative, proposing maximum retention of existing buildings and facilities of a good or satisfactory character."<sup>131</sup> In his review, he identified six major advantages and six major disadvantages of the plan. The advantages included: its provision of low-rent housing for the area's current low-income families, with a minimum of relocation; its explicitness; its retention of sound existing structures; the practicality of its housing proposals from a real estate perspective; the gradual and organic nature of the redevelopment proposed, allowing for stops, starts, and changes mid-process; and the emphasis on the development of citywide commercial areas in Southwest.<sup>132</sup> The disadvantages he cited included: the disconnect between land use allocations in the Peets Plan versus those in the Comprehensive Plan, particularly concerning the large amount of

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<sup>124</sup> Goodwillie, 17.

<sup>125</sup> Robert Wrigley Jr., "Development Plans for the Southwest survey Area of Washington, D.C.," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* XVIII-XIX (1952-1953): 194.

<sup>126</sup> Harland Bartholomew & Associates, 23-24.

<sup>127</sup> U.S. NCPC and Gutheim, 314.

<sup>128</sup> Wrigley, 194.

<sup>129</sup> Harland Bartholomew & Associates, 23-24.

<sup>130</sup> Wrigley, 194.

<sup>131</sup> Harland Bartholomew & Associates, 21.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.



commercial space; its advocacy of several questionable land use locations, including proposals to develop housing north of the Expressway, to place so much second commercial on the waterfront, and to locate low-income housing in the northwest; the inadequate school plan; an over-emphasis on high-rise apartment buildings; legal issues surrounding the conversion of streets to park space; and the minimal amount of transformation it would actually provide.<sup>133</sup>

In the end, the Peets Plan was rejected, largely due to this last disadvantage. The HHFA and others did not think that its proposed changes to the area were radical enough to justify the public expense. Thus, it was deemed economically infeasible.<sup>134</sup>

### *Justement-Smith Plan*

In response to the perceived inadequacy of the Peets Plan, in 1952 the RLA commissioned planner Louis Justement, of Justement, Elam, and Darley, and architect-planner Chloethiel Woodard Smith, of Keyes, Smith, Satterlee, and Lethbridge, to develop a more radical alternative plan for Southwest redevelopment.<sup>135</sup> In his 1946 book *New Cities for Old*, Justement had written, "Let us not be afraid to plan the city." He further elaborated, "The city is a living, growing organism and the buildings that compose it must be constantly renewed in order to preserve the entire organism."<sup>136</sup> These principles, as well as similar sentiments expressed in the writings of Smith, would influence the pair's less tentative proposal.

When the RLA commissioned Justement and Smith, it did not require them to consider the rehabilitation of existing structures, but proposed a less restrictive mindset that would "release and stimulate progress" outside of Southwest as well.<sup>137</sup> Where the Peets Plan represented the most conservative end of the spectrum, the Justement-Smith Plan detailed the most substantial amount of change to the area that could produce desirable results.<sup>138</sup> Moreover, where Peets was concerned with minimizing inconvenience and relocation for the existing residents, Justement and Smith were focused on maximizing the business and economic benefits of redevelopment. As Justement had also written in *New Cities for Old*, "Our cities were built for the sake of making money. If we wish to rebuild them with the same energy we displayed in the first instance, we should make it profitable for the entrepreneur to undertake the task, unless we are prepared to make profound changes in the profit system."<sup>139</sup>

There were several key aspects of the Justement-Smith Plan. First, the plan was geared towards a mixed-income residential community, with a much greater emphasis on upper income groups than the Peets Plan. Second, it recognized the importance of reconnecting the Southwest with the rest of Washington, D.C. – a situation that it primarily sought to address through the construction of a Tenth Street promenade, overpassing the railroad tracks. Third, it aimed to

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>134</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1952, 2.

<sup>135</sup> Goode, 408.

<sup>136</sup> Justement, 6.

<sup>137</sup> U.S. NCPC and Gutheim, 315.

<sup>138</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1952, 3.

<sup>139</sup> Justement, 6.

completely reorganize first commercial activities through the construction of a series of major shopping centers. Finally, it exploited the natural advantage of the waterfront as a location for high-end housing, commercial facilities, and recreational areas.<sup>140</sup> It should also be noted that this proposal was fundamentally a concept plan, leaving much room for detailed interpretation, and even going so far as to encourage the variety and texture that multiple architects and planners would infuse with their individual contributions to its enactment.<sup>141</sup> In its extremism, the plan also functioned as a useful tool for attracting developers who would be drawn by the economic potential of a project located on the site of a former slum.<sup>142</sup>

Residentially, the plan recommended the inclusion of as much high-income development as possible, although it argued that the plan could be adapted for low-income development if desired.<sup>143</sup> The high-income residential areas would be particularly concentrated in the northwest corner of the urban renewal area, near the proposed cultural center and central business district, as well as adjacent to the waterfront. Low-income housing would be concentrated near current public housing in the southeast.<sup>144</sup>

As with the Peets Plan, the Justement-Smith Plan would retain viable community facilities. In addition, once second commercial uses were removed from the waterfront, the area would be turned into "an inviting park strip with walks, a bicycle path, small refreshment stands and a spacious waterfront café."<sup>145</sup>

According to the plan, first commercial uses would be largely reorganized into major shopping centers, although some "corner grocery" facilities would also remain in residential areas. The major commercial centers would be located north of the expressway, between Ninth and Seventh streets, and south of Eye Street, between Delaware Avenue and South Capitol Street. Second commercial was recommended for the areas near the expressway and west of South Capitol Street.<sup>146</sup>

As already mentioned, boundaries and entryways were important aspects of the Justement-Smith Plan. A widened and landscaped Tenth Street promenade would serve as the primary entryway. It was intended to connect directly to Maine Avenue along the waterfront, although topographic conditions led to the insurmountable engineering difficulties that prevented that realization.<sup>147</sup> In addition to Tenth Street, the plan also proposed a secondary landscaped

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<sup>140</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1952, 3.

<sup>141</sup> U.S. NCPCP and Gutheim, 316; Mary Mix Foley, "What is Urban Redevelopment?" *Architectural Forum* 97 (August 1952), 128.

<sup>142</sup> U.S. NCPC and Gutheim, 317.

<sup>143</sup> Harland Bartholomew & Associates, 26-27.

<sup>144</sup> Wrigley, 196.

<sup>145</sup> Foley, 128.

<sup>146</sup> Wrigley, 196.

<sup>147</sup> U.S. NCPC and Gutheim, 315.

entryway at Fourth Street, terminating at a plaza next to Fort McNair.<sup>148</sup> In practice, however, Fourth Street was actually de-emphasized as a throughway in the later redevelopment plans.

Consistent with the Justement-Smith Plan's engagement of the expressway in developing an entryway, the plan also included a point of view regarding the expressway's location. Instead of having the roadway provide yet another divider in the Southwest by running through its area, the plan suggested that the expressway be placed adjacent to the railroad tracks, thereby defining the residential area and avoiding adding another intermittent boundary. Justement and Smith were unsuccessful in this proposal, however, in part because of desires to save a refrigeration plant (now the Washington Design Center) that would have had to be destroyed in the event of expressway rerouting.<sup>149</sup>

As with the Peets' Plan, the NCPC also asked Harland Bartholomew to analyze the Justement-Smith proposal. Versus the balanced six advantages and six disadvantages identified in the Peets Plan, Bartholomew identified only five advantages and as many as eight disadvantages in the later plan.

The advantages included the following: its "imaginative," "forward looking," and "almost idealistic" character; its compliance with the Comprehensive Plan in terms of land use; its favorable arrangement of schools and public uses; its desirable reduction of street area through street closings; and, its relatively open nature, designating large amounts of open space. The counteracting eight disadvantages were the following: its substantial level of proposed transformation, which Bartholomew perceived as only questionably achievable; several potentially impractical and unsubstantiated real estate features, including too high a proportion of high-rise units, an office building west of Tenth Street, a shopping center north of the freeway, and construction of luxury apartment buildings facing the produce center; its lack of provision for rehousing, including low income housing (note: this was outside their remit); its minimization of Maine Avenue's commercial use; the dissonance of its high-rise proposals with current zoning; its costly rearrangement of first commercial uses; the difficulty of measuring its economic impacts, given its unspecificity; and, its risky proposal to begin construction with the luxury northwest high-rises, in the hope that the other areas would develop in accordance.<sup>150</sup>

In the end, like the Peets Plan, the Justement-Smith Plan was not adopted as the overall plan for the Southwest. However, unlike the Peets Plan, it undeniably served as a guide and inspiration for future plans for the area,<sup>151</sup> including both the Zeckendorf Plan for Project Area C, and the development by one of its co-authors, Chloethiel Woodard Smith, in Project Area B.

#### *Harland Bartholomew's Compromise Plan*

As has already been discussed, the planner Harland Bartholomew played a key role in mediating and advising upon Southwest's redevelopment. Bartholomew is often credited with

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<sup>148</sup> Wrigley, 196.

<sup>149</sup> U.S. NCPC and Gutheim, 316; SCC and SWNA, 9.

<sup>150</sup> Harland Bartholomew & Associates, 27-29.

<sup>151</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1961, 4.

having turned planning into a profession, as he was the first full-time planner employed by an American city – St. Louis. In addition, he is remembered for demonstrating that planning is government's responsibility, and for rationalizing and systemizing planning into a discipline that can be taught.<sup>152</sup> In addition to heading his own planning firm, Bartholomew also served as Chairman of the NCPC between 1953 and 1960. Prior to that time, or between 1922 and 1952, he served as a consultant to the Planning Commission.<sup>153</sup> It was at the end of that period that he was called upon to offer advice on the planning process for Southwest.

In May 1952, Harland Bartholomew & Associates completed its own Southwest redevelopment report. Since neither the Peets Plan nor the Justement-Smith Plan had met the requirements of the Comprehensive Plan, the NCPPC requested that Bartholomew and his firm review and interpret the *Comprehensive Plan for Washington* relative to Southwest and develop a third plan combining elements of both of the two existing plans.<sup>154</sup> The report's recommendations served as a basis and set of guiding principles for the NCPC's Land Use Plan for the Southwest Survey Area.<sup>155</sup>

Generally speaking, the Bartholomew report recommended a plan between the Peets and Justement-Smith extremes.<sup>156</sup> This report has already alluded to the essence of those recommendations through a description of the analysis his report offered on the two existing plans. However, some of the specific details are discussed below.

As suggested by Bartholomew's criticism of the Justement-Smith Plan's emphasis on high-income residents and residences, the report advocates a low-income residential emphasis in the new Southwest. Citing lower income groups' greater need to live close to their employment, the great difficulty of so significantly upgrading an area's socioeconomic character, and the associated relocation issues involved in replacing lower income with upper income residents, Bartholomew write, "The Survey Area should be redeveloped predominantly as a moderate to lower-income residence area, this being in accordance with the basic needs and requirements of the population from a district-wide point of view."<sup>157</sup> This did not mean that the area would be exclusively lower income, however, as the report also advocated the inclusion of housing for all income groups, suggesting that upper income housing be introduced as late in the process as possible.<sup>158</sup> As a result, the report concluded that only half of the existing population would need to be relocated.<sup>159</sup>

In terms of the actual residences, Bartholomew recommends rehabilitation "only where a building is in very good condition and so located that it does not interfere with the project

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<sup>152</sup> Eldridge Lovelace, *Harland Bartholomew: His Contributions to American Urban Planning* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Printing Office, 1993), <http://stlouis.missouri.org/heritage/bartholomew/>, 1-2.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

<sup>154</sup> Harland Bartholomew & Associates, 1; D.C. RLA, 'This is RLA', 4.

<sup>155</sup> U.S. NCPC, *Redevelopment Plan . . . Area B*, 11.

<sup>156</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1952, 3.

<sup>157</sup> Harland Bartholomew & Associates, 14.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

plan.”<sup>160</sup> Regarding the total number of dwelling units to occupy the redeveloped area, Bartholomew recommended a figure virtually halfway between that of the Peets and Justement-Smith Plans.

The report suggested imprecise dwelling unit estimates to be used as a guideline. The advised number of high-rise apartment building units – “no more than 1/5” – was relatively low given significant recent construction of housing of this sort in other parts of the city. The row houses were set at a figure of “at least 30 percent” given the strong demand and good financing available, as well as the better caliber of tenant that they attract. Two-story flats were described as “relatively economical to construct” and as offering individuals the opportunity to buy a block while occupying one unit and renting others at a low rent rate. Finally, the two-to-three story flats recommended would offer relatively high density and low-priced rental units close to the center of the city.<sup>161</sup>

All of the Southwest land use plans advocated increasing the land allocated to community uses from approximately 9 percent to 15 percent of the land area. Schools and recreational space comprised the greatest portion of these community facilities, or 56 of 63 acres in the Bartholomew plan. Bartholomew suggests the construction of two new schools, and the retention of the public library (then housed in a wing of Jefferson Junior High School). Other services, but not structures, that the report advocated retaining include the police and fire stations, churches, and community houses.<sup>162</sup>

Commercially, the Bartholomew report endorsed the continuation of existing first commercial usage on Seventh Street, Maine Avenue, and Fourth Street, between F and L streets.<sup>163</sup> It stated: “The practical solution to the location of the business property would certainly appear to be to improve the character of the present uses but to keep them in the same general area.”<sup>164</sup> It also argued for the continuation of selected second commercial uses, including those in the areas between the proposed expressway and the railroad tracks, west of Tenth Street, and near South Capitol Street. The types of industry it regarded as appropriate for Southwest included bottling plants, laundries, creameries, warehouses, and research laboratories.<sup>165</sup>

Finally, beyond specific land use recommendations, the Bartholomew report also suggested five general criteria that any redevelopment plan for the Southwest should satisfy. These included recommendations that the plan: be sufficiently complete and definite so as to enable analysis and individual project plan development, propose marketable property uses,

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>163</sup> U.S. NCPC, *Redevelopment Plan . . . Area B*, 18.

<sup>164</sup> Harland Bartholomew & Associates, 30.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 19.

deliver maximum benefits at minimal capital costs, be executable in stages, and minimize relocation problems.<sup>166</sup>

### *NCPC Land Use Plan*

With the written assistance of Elbert Peets, as well as the input of the Bartholomew report, which incorporated both of the two earlier reports, the NCPC issued its own compromise land use plan in late 1952.<sup>167</sup> It was adopted by the NCPC on October 24, 1952,<sup>168</sup> although numerous revisions and project-level adjustments would be made for years after that. The hallmark of the plan was that it avoided the "extremes of idealism . . . and the extreme of expediency"<sup>169</sup> that had characterized several previous plan proposals.

There were seven principal proposals of the plan:

- (1) That the area continue to house about the same number of families
- (2) That the plan induce balanced and protected residential neighborhoods for all income groups, with approximately one quarter of the housing designated for low-income families
- (3) That the Southwest expressway, and other thoroughfare proposals, be approved by the Commissioners so that heavy through traffic may be kept off residential streets so far as possible
- (4) That land for city-wide commercial needs be provided to the maximum extent consistent with the housing of the same size population
- (5) That, in general, the established local commercial centers be continued
- (6) That residential redevelopment be governed by adequate density standards to prevent over-crowding of land
- (7) That most of the low-rent housing, whether public or private, be located east of Fourth Street, although not exclusively so.<sup>170</sup>

As a high-level summary of some of the land use debates that took place between the many plans, the following table compares several proposed land use allocations for the 427-acre Southwest Survey Area:<sup>171</sup>

	<u>Old SW</u>	<u>Peets</u>	<u>Just.-Smith</u>	<u>Bartholomew</u>	<u>NCPC Adopted</u>
Vacant	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Residential	31%	29%	32%	32%	29%
Public and Semi-Public	9%	15%	15%	15%	15%

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., 20-21.

<sup>167</sup> U.S. NCPC and Gutheim, 317.

<sup>168</sup> US NCPC, *Redevelopment Plan . . . Area B*.

<sup>169</sup> Quoted in U.S. NCPC and Gutheim, 317.

<sup>170</sup> U.S. NCPC, *Redevelopment Plan . . . Area B*, ii.

<sup>171</sup> "Old SW" and "Peets" from Harland Bartholomew & Associates, 22; "Justement-Smith" from Harland Bartholomew & Associates, 26; "Bartholomew" from Harland Bartholomew & Associates, 8-9; "NCPC Adopted" from U.S. NCPC, *Redevelopment Plan . . . Area B*, 24.

First Commercial	5%	4%	6%	6%	5%
Industrial	9%	12%	9%	8%	12%
Streets and Alleys	44%	40%	40%	39%	40%

Regarding the income group of the future residents, the NCPC was not willing to completely turn the area over to high-income residents. It also estimated that half of the old Southwest residents would be able to afford the new construction. Finally, for those who were displaced, adequate compensation would have to be made. In the redevelopment plan for Project Area B, the NCPC noted, "A plan based on the use of public money to accomplish a public purpose cannot ignore social values of such importance or contemplate sweeping measures of family displacement without a reasonable and specific plan for replacement."<sup>172</sup>

The housing units would comprise "a dramatic arrangement of apartment buildings overlooking parks bordering the waterfront,"<sup>173</sup> and neighborhood unity would be encouraged by the consolidation of existing lots. The expressway would serve as the northern boundary for residential structures, and the communities south of that boundary would fall into four clusters: (1) the area bounded by Maine Avenue, Fourth Street, the expressway, and M Street; (2) the area bounded by Maine Avenue, Delaware Avenue, M Street, and P Street; (3) the area bounded by Delaware Avenue, South Capitol Street, M Street, and P Street; and (4) the area bounded by Fourth Street, South Capitol Street, the expressway, and M Street.<sup>174</sup> The following table summarizes various plans' recommended distribution of housing units, showing both the absolute number of dwelling units of each type, as well as the percentage that those represented of the total dwelling units:<sup>175</sup>

	Peets		Just.-Smith		Bartholomew		NCPC Adopted	
High-Rise Apts.	1,700	30%	2,681	44%	1,076	19%	1,827	33%
Row Houses	1,350	24%	832	14%	1,614	28%	1325	24%
2-Story Flats	400	7%	1,062	18%	538	9%	440	8%
2-3 Story Apts.	990	18%	1,468	24%	2,152	37%	1,610	29%
Low-Rent	770	14%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Subtotal	5,210	93%	6,043	100%	5,380	93%	5,202	94%
Above Commercial	390	7%	0	0%	420	7%	360	7%
Total Units	5,600	100%	6,043	100%	5,800	100%	5,562	100%

In terms of community facilities, the plan stipulated that all structurally sound churches and other semi-public facilities would be retained, and that public facilities would be supplemented with one new school and additional recreational space.

<sup>172</sup> U.S. NCPC, *Redevelopment Plan . . . Area B*, 20.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>175</sup> "Peets" from Harland Bartholomew & Associates, 23; "Justement-Smith" from Harland Bartholomew & Associates, 26; "Bartholomew" from Harland Bartholomew & Associates, 17; "NCPC Adopted" from U.S. NCPC, *Redevelopment Plan . . . Area B*, 24.

Commercially, waterfront-related commercial activities would be expanded at that location, and the Fourth Street first commercial facilities would be reorganized into a more focal shopping center. Among second commercial uses, a contested produce market in the northwest corner of the quadrant would remain, and other industrial facilities would congregate in the area between the expressway and the railroad tracks.<sup>176</sup>

The NCPC's plan also endorsed Justement and Smith's Tenth Street promenade proposal, although it recognized that the specific details, including the proposed junction with Maine Avenue, still needed to be determined.<sup>177</sup>

### Individual Redevelopment Projects

At the same time that alternative plans were being prepared for the overall Southwest Survey Area, work was also proceeding on development of a plan for the first redevelopment area. In May 1952, the NCPC rescinded the boundaries of the five tentative Southwest project areas and replaced them with the boundaries of two definitive project areas – A and B. Project Area A, intended as the site of future office and commercial facilities,<sup>178</sup> generally included the area bounded by D Street on the north, Seventh Street on the east, Maine Avenue on the south, and Eleventh Street on the west. Project Area B consisted of 76 acres generally bounded by E Street and the railroad tracks on the north, South Capitol Street on the east, Eye Street on the south, and Fourth Street on the west.<sup>179</sup> As seemingly insurmountable planning problems existed in Project Area A, Project Area B became the site of the first redevelopment project.<sup>180</sup> Project Area A would later be incorporated into Project Area C.

### *Project Area B*

### EARLY PROGRESS

As already discussed, in May 1952, at the same time that the Justement-Smith Plan was completed, boundaries were also set for Project Area B – the first redevelopment project in Washington, D.C.

Project Area B was a symbolically appropriate starting point for urban renewal for many of the same reasons that the Southwest had been chosen – it encompassed some of the worst slum conditions in one of the most slum-ridden corners of the Capital. 1,006 structures, containing 1,345 dwelling units, occupied this 76.6-acre area of the old Southwest. The following table characterizes some of the dwelling unit conditions in Project Area B relative to those of the overall Southwest Survey Area:<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> U.S. NCPC, *Redevelopment Plan . . . Area B*, 21-23.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>178</sup> Goode, 408.

<sup>179</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1952, 1.

<sup>180</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1954, 19.

<sup>181</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1952, 13.



	SW Survey Area	Project Area B	Delta
No inside toilet	43.2%	57.8%	14.6%
No inside running water	27.2%	31.3%	4.1%
No installed bath	44.3%	60.3%	16.0%
No wash basin or installed laundry tub	68.0%	82.2%	14.2%
No electricity installed	21.3%	29.3%	8.0%
No central heating installed	70.2%	83.8%	13.6%

Project Area B's population was also almost entirely black. The race of 97.5 percent of the project area's population was black, versus that of only 78.6 percent of the population of the overall Survey Area. In total, 5,012 people, or 1,345 families occupied the area.<sup>182</sup>

In June 1952, funds were approved for development of the plan for that area,<sup>183</sup> and that plan was approved by the NCPC on October 24.<sup>184</sup> On November 12, the RLA placed an advertisement in four Washington papers, requesting proposals from parties interested in purchasing or leasing Project Area B's land. These advertisements stated that proposals would be judged based upon the following factors:

- (1) The purchase-price or lease-rent to be paid for the land
- (2) The degree to which the proposal met the specifications and broad objectives of the Redevelopment Plan
- (3) The rents or sales prices on the dwelling accommodations to be constructed by the redeveloper
- (4) The degree to which one-third of the dwelling units proposed met the low-rent requirement of the Redevelopment Plan; namely, rentals of \$17 per room per month or less
- (5) The experience, qualifications, ability, and interest of the principal participants involved in any proposal.<sup>185</sup>

On December 31, following a successful public hearing held by the District Commissioners, the plan for Project Area B was fully approved.<sup>186</sup>

#### PLAN DETAILS

The Redevelopment Plan for Area B was an attempt to apply the objectives of the Comprehensive Plan to a very local area of the city. As such, in its introductory pages, it lists the following nine local objectives of the Comprehensive Plan that it meets:

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<sup>182</sup> U.S. NCPC, *Redevelopment Plan . . . Area B*, 3.

<sup>183</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1952, vi.

<sup>184</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1953, 1.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>186</sup> FCC, Washington, D.C., *Urban Renewal Plan in the District of Columbia*, 26.

- (1) To continue the area as a residential location for low-income persons, many of whom are employed within walking distance in the Southwest Survey Area, the central business district and nearby government offices and establishments
- (2) To utilize in the most direct manner available school and recreation facilities which are most needed by the large families prevalent in low-income groups
- (3) To provide, both as to location and general environment, a cross-section of housing types shown by the Survey Area analysis to be needed and marketable, with a substantial proportion of these types designated as low-rent under the District of Columbia Redevelopment Act of 1945
- (4) To allocate land in the project area for the Southwest expressway
- (5) To provide new second commercial areas to help meet the city-wide deficit for land in this use category
- (6) To rehabilitate Fourth Street through the stimulus provided by partial redevelopment within the project area
- (7) To rearrange the recreation facilities of Randall Junior High School in anticipation of the construction of a swimming pool which would disrupt the present layout
- (8) To create a well-planned, cohesive neighborhood unit which will eliminate slum and alley dwellings and which can be maintained against blight and deterioration for the duration of the Project
- (9) To provide maximum opportunity for large-scale development by private enterprise.<sup>187</sup>

Also notable were the plan's provisions for potential future low-income and/or minority ethnicity residents. Specifically, it required that "one-third of the housing be designated for low-income families with rents not exceeding \$17 per room per month, excluding utilities"<sup>188</sup> and that "there be appropriate covenants running with the land with respect to the prohibition of restrictions upon the sale, lease, or occupancy of any land or real property in the Project Area on the basis of race, color, or creed."<sup>189</sup> Unless amended, these provisions, along with all others in the plan, would remain in effect for forty years from its date of adoption in 1952.<sup>190</sup>

While the provision for a race-neutral housing policy proved trend setting for the city, the low rent requirement was eventually deemed feasibly impractical. Thus, the NCPC approved its elimination in June 1959,<sup>191</sup> with the D.C. Commissioners later confirming that decision. The revocation was based on several considerations, including cost increases that made the \$17 limit unrealistic, the construction of public housing elsewhere in Southwest, and the absence of Federal housing legislation that would make the construction of housing for lower-middle-

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<sup>187</sup> U.S. NCPC, *Redevelopment Plan . . . Area B*, Appendix E 4-5.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, ii.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, Appendix E 15.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, Appendix E 16.

<sup>191</sup> Robert E. McLaughlin, "Opening Statement," in Government of the District of Columbia, "Public Hearing: Revision of Redevelopment Plan for Southwest Project Area 'B,'" 17 July 1959, 2, Albert J. Headley, Jr. Papers.

income families economical.<sup>192</sup> While the Washington Housing Association endorsed the amendment, with the proviso that development contain middle-income housing,<sup>193</sup> groups like the Southwest Citizens Association opposed the change on the grounds that it would constitute a breach of faith with displaced former occupants of Southwest, as well as that it would set a dangerous precedent for urban renewal projects elsewhere in the country.<sup>194</sup> Despite planners' original intentions, then, the Southwest would be developed beyond the means of lower and lower-middle income residents until the late 1960s.

Generally speaking, the Redevelopment Plan for Project Area B specified residential and second commercial usage for the area. More specifically, it included specifications for 750 to 900 dwelling units<sup>195</sup> – a number later updated to 1500<sup>196</sup> – consisting of row houses, 2-story flats, and apartment houses; community facilities like an enlarged Randall Recreation Center; first commercial usage along Fourth Street, along with incremental second-floor housing where appropriate;<sup>197</sup> and second commercial development – including the Southwest Market Center, Inc. – between the expressway and E Street. The following table summarizes the former and proposed land use acreage in Project Area B:<sup>198</sup>

	Old Southwest		NCPC Plan	
Residential	26.8	35.0%	24.2	31.6%
Community Facilities	11.4	14.9%	11.7	11.7%
First Commercial	1.8	2.3%	3.9	5.1%
Second Commercial	2.7	3.5%	5.1	6.7%
Streets and Alleys	33.9	44.3%	17.5	22.8%
Expressway			14.2	18.5%
Total acres	76.6	100%	76.6	100%

In tandem with the specifications for new development, certain sites were excluded from the project area boundaries and, thus, redevelopment. These included the parcels of land occupied by the D.C. Health Center, the Randall Junior High School, part of the Randall Recreation Center, and a South Capitol Street dog pound.<sup>199</sup> In addition, the pastor of the Friendship Baptist Church was later successful in removing his church's property from the redevelopment boundaries as well.

<sup>192</sup> Charles A. Horsky, "Statement of Charles A. Horsky, President Washington Housing Association on Proposed Changes in the Redevelopment Plan for Southwest Redevelopment Project Area B," 17 July 1959, 4, Albert J. Headley, Jr. Papers.

<sup>193</sup> Horsky, 6.

<sup>194</sup> Albert J. Headley, Jr., "Statement of Albert J. Headley, Jr. Before the District Commissioners on July 17, 1959 as a Representative of the Southwest Citizens Association," 17 July 1959, Albert J. Headley, Jr. Papers.

<sup>195</sup> U.S. NCPC, "Appendix E," *Redevelopment Plan . . . Area B*, 8.

<sup>196</sup> Federal City Council, *Urban Renewal Plan in the District of Columbia*, 29.

<sup>197</sup> U.S. NCPC, "Appendix E," *Redevelopment Plan . . . Area B*, 11; Wrigley, 200.

<sup>198</sup> U.S. NCPC, *Redevelopment Plan . . . Area B*, 4; U.S. NCPC, "Appendix E," 7.

<sup>199</sup> U.S. NCPC, "Appendix E," *Redevelopment Plan . . . Area B*, 13-15.

## PROJECT EXECUTION

Following plan approval by the NCPC and D.C. Commissioners, progress proceeded toward plan execution. By the end of March 1953, the RLA had received ten proposals to redevelop Project Area B. After meeting individually with the various parties, by the end of April they selected the Bush Construction Company, of Norfolk, VA, to be the primary redeveloper, in coordination with five old Southwest businesses who wanted to rebuild there: Safeway Stores, Inc., Martin Wiegand, Inc., Eagle Transfer Co., Max Greenwald, and Rudderforth Bros.<sup>200</sup> Also in that month, the RLA received its first funding from the HHFA for Project Area B. This funding included a loan of \$8,838,391 and a capital grant of \$6,385,186.<sup>201</sup> In May, the RLA engaged appraisers in preparation for land acquisition, and in June they formally opened a relocation field office at 617 Fourth St.<sup>202</sup> In July, they relocated the first family.

One obstacle that somewhat slowed progress in Project Area B was the December 1952 law suit that two commercial property owners filed against the RLA's practice of eminent domain. In November 1953, a circuit court ruled in the RLA's favor.<sup>203</sup> One year later, in November 1954, the case, *Berman v. Parker*, eventually reached the Supreme Court and was settled once and for all in the RLA's favor.<sup>204</sup>

Despite these legal difficulties, the RLA acquired its first parcel of land in Project Area B on December 8, 1953. The two-story brick row house and 810 square feet of land located at 825 Third St. were purchased from owner William J. Emmett, of 2223 Nichols Ave., SE.<sup>205</sup> A more symbolic step was taken when Dixon's Court, Washington, D.C.'s largest and most ill-reputed alley dwelling community, was demolished on April 26, 1954. The Federal Housing Administrator, Albert Cole, presided at the event, which was the first demolition of a slum dwelling in the Washington, D.C., urban renewal process.<sup>206</sup> The demolition of this large area lasted through the end of May.<sup>207</sup>

Another significant hiccup in Project Area B's progress occurred when the Bush Construction Company became ineligible for FHA-insured mortgage financing – a near-necessity for its participation in Southwest's urban renewal. The FHA notified the RLA of this ineligibility in April 1955, citing as their rationale the company's previous participation in the FHA Section 608 program, which was at that time under Congressional and administrative investigation. Although the FHA later reinstated the company's eligibility, the Bush Company

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<sup>200</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1953, 2; Federal City Council, *Urban Renewal Plan in the District of Columbia*, 27.

<sup>201</sup> Federal City Council, *Urban Renewal Plan in the District of Columbia*, 26.

<sup>202</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1953, 2.

<sup>203</sup> D.C. RLA, 'This is RLA', 4.

<sup>204</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1955, 2.

<sup>205</sup> Richard L. Lyons, "Land Agency Buys 1<sup>st</sup> Area B Property," *Washington Post*, 9 December 1953.

<sup>206</sup> George Beveridge, "Cole Launches Demolition of Area B Units," *Evening Star* [Washington, D.C.], 26 April 1954.

<sup>207</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1954, 5.

had already withdrawn as redeveloper in May, having been unable to obtain alternative mortgage financing.<sup>208</sup>

The RLA responded to this significant loss with a hasty search for a new residential developer for Project Area B. After reviewing the three proposals submitted, on October 21, 1955, the Agency selected the joint proposal by Roger L. Stevens and James H. Scheuer, both of New York, NY.<sup>209</sup> On July 2, 1956, the developers, now operating as the First National Capitol Redevelopment Corporation, signed a lease agreement for Project Area B.<sup>210</sup> The redevelopment plans drawn up by their architects, Satterlee and Smith, built upon ideas contained in the plans drawn up by architect Milton J. Prassas for previous developer Ralph Bush.<sup>211</sup>

Also during this time period, on January 31, 1956, the NCPC modified the redevelopment plan for Project Area B to replace the proposed retail construction with high-density apartments. The Commission made this change in response to requests by Project Area C's developer, Webb & Knapp, to focus all first commercial development in its own portion of the quadrant.<sup>212</sup>

Although relocation of the population and land acquisition had been substantially finished by late 1955, these activities were not completed until 1957.<sup>213</sup> Shortly after, on April 9, 1958, ground was broken for the first private construction in a Washington, D.C., redevelopment area.<sup>214</sup> This construction project was for Capitol Park Apartments, the first high rise in architect Chloethiel Woodard Smith's Capitol Park residential complex. (See the Residential Buildings section for additional information.) As this project went on to become the first Title I project to win an award for design, architect I.M. Pei held up Project B as "proof that the redevelopment process could produce a result beyond slum clearance alone."<sup>215</sup>

In fiscal 1959,<sup>216</sup> the RLA completed the relocation of the last of the twenty-one businesses relocated from Project Area B. By this point, the Agency had also already relocated 1,041 families from the area. The last building was also demolished during that period.<sup>217</sup> Project Area B was completed in approximately August 1963,<sup>218</sup> almost twelve years after the October 1951 project start, which was marked by the initial determination of Project Area B's boundaries. After an analysis of the overall Project B redevelopment process, the Federal City Council concluded that the experiences of the developers and agencies, including the numerous

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<sup>208</sup> Federal City Council, *Urban Renewal Program in the District of Columbia*, 27; D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1961, 4.

<sup>209</sup> Federal City Council, *Urban Renewal Program in the District of Columbia*, 27.

<sup>210</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1956, 2.

<sup>211</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1954, 10, referenced in Design Research, 19; Design Research, 19.

<sup>212</sup> Federal City Council, *Urban Renewal Program in the District of Columbia*, 28.

<sup>213</sup> D.C. Board of Commissioners, *State of the Nation's Capital: A Report to the Congress from the Board of Commissioners of the District of Columbia*, January 1962, Albert J. Headley, Jr. Papers, F-6; D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1957, 2.

<sup>214</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1958, 2.

<sup>215</sup> I.M. Pei, "Urban Renewal in Southwest Washington," *Washington in Transition*, 68.

<sup>216</sup> All references to fiscal years refer to the RLA's fiscal year, which runs from July 1 through June 30.

<sup>217</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1959, 5.

<sup>218</sup> D.C. Board of Commissioners, *State of the Nation's Capital*, January 1962, F-6.

delays, were "common experiences in the pioneering redevelopment undertakings throughout the country."<sup>219</sup>

### *Project Area C*

#### EARLY PROGRESS

Shortly after progress got underway in Project Area B, headway was already being made on the second, and largest, Southwest redevelopment project – Area C. On June 26, 1953, the NCPC adopted the area's initial boundaries. The Board of Commissioners approved these two months later.<sup>220</sup> Project Area C initially encompassed 162.5 acres "lying between Maine Avenue on the west and South Capitol Street and Delaware Avenue on the east, and between Eye Street on the north and P Street on the south."<sup>221</sup> Later, its boundaries would be expanded to the north, beyond the railroad tracks, and a 30.5-acre portion would also be carved out as Project Area C-1. Thus, Project Area C ultimately encompassed approximately 442 acres – including all of the expanded Survey Area except Project Areas B and C-1.<sup>222</sup>

The conditions in Project Area C were not as severe as in Project Area B, but they were still deemed in need of significant redevelopment. The table below compares the conditions and characteristics between the two areas, as well as Project Area C-1.<sup>223</sup>

	Area B	Area C	Area C-1
Population	5,104	17,690	622
Percent Black	97.5%	59.2%	98.9%
Population per Family	3.7	4.0	3.6
Dwelling Units	1,370	4,316	200
Percent Sub-Standard	79.8%	76.0%	85.0%
Percent Owner-Occupied	12.8%	18.4%	14.7%
Average Monthly Rent	\$29.78	\$39.55	\$31.24
Rooms per Unit	4.0	4.3	3.2

In addition, an earlier survey of Project Area C, when it included only 162.5 acres, found that, while plumbing was generally better than in Project Area B, electricity and heating conditions were slightly worse.<sup>224</sup>

	Project Area B	Project Area C
No inside toilet	57.8%	47.8%

<sup>219</sup> Federal City Council, *Urban Renewal Program in the District of Columbia*, 30.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>221</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1953, 7.

<sup>222</sup> Federal City Council, *Urban Renewal Program in the District of Columbia*, 30.

<sup>223</sup> Discrepancies between Project Area B figures in the Area B and Area C plans must reflect updated information at the time of Area C Plan preparation; U.S. NCPC, *Urban Renewal Plan . . . Area C*, Appendix A 3.

<sup>224</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1953, v.

No inside running water	31.3%	20.1%
No installed bath	60.3%	36.2%
No wash basin or installed laundry tub	82.2%	62.3%
No electricity installed	29.3%	16.5%
No central heating installed	83.8%	72.2%

A later survey of the portion of Project Area C lying north of the railroad tracks found similar, to slightly worse, conditions there. For example, 19 percent of the units had no running water and 51 percent had no installed bath.<sup>225</sup>

On September 1, 1953, the RLA requested Federal planning funds for the project area. These funds were approved on February 9, 1954, and finalized with a contract signed on April 27, 1954.<sup>226</sup> In the midst of those funding negotiations, however, on September 1, 1953, developer William Zeckendorf, of the New York-based firm Webb & Knapp, presented the RLA with a redevelopment proposal for an expanded Area C.<sup>227</sup> Zeckendorf was a nationally prominent figure in real estate development, and particularly in urban renewal, as it offered investment with "maximum leverage."<sup>228</sup>

The firm signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the RLA on March 15, 1954. Under the provisions of the agreement, the RLA would refrain from negotiations with other developers on Project Area C for a period of one year. It would also work to obtain acceptance of the Tenth Street Mall concept – a requisite feature for Webb & Knapp's participation on the project. In return, Webb & Knapp would develop detailed engineering, economic, and development studies for the proposed private use of the area (approximately 50 percent of the Project Area C land area).<sup>229</sup>

The Tenth Street Mall, or Promenade, or the L'Enfant Promenade (as it was later called), proved to be the key point of contention in the two-year negotiations that ensued, causing multiple extensions of the MOU's period of existence. (The specific details of that debate are discussed in the section of this report that focuses on the L'Enfant Promenade.)

In March 1955, President Eisenhower asked the Honorable George A. Garrett, former U.S. Ambassador to Ireland and President of the Federal City Council (FCC), to take a leadership role in resolving the ongoing Project C conflicts in order to facilitate forward momentum with the project.<sup>230</sup> On December 1, 1955, Garrett issued a report summarizing the significant progress that had been made in Project Area C discussions, including details of an

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<sup>225</sup> U.S. NCPC, *Urban Renewal Plan . . . Area C*, Appendix C-1.

<sup>226</sup> Federal City Council, *Urban Renewal Program in the District of Columbia*, 30.

<sup>227</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1954, 4.

<sup>228</sup> Anderson Notter Finegold, Mariani and Associates, Bryant and Bryant, *Southwest Waterfront Study; Prepared Under Contract to the Federal City Council, for Presentation to the International Cultural and Trade Center Task Force* ([Washington, D.C.]: n.p., September 1983), 117.

<sup>229</sup> Federal City Council, *Urban Renewal Program in the District of Columbia*, 31.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*, D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1955, 8.

agreement that had been reached on all major questions.<sup>231</sup> As a result, on April 5, 1956, the NCPC approved the Webb & Knapp plan, along with its Project Area C boundaries.<sup>232</sup> On November 30, 1956 final approval was obtained through the endorsement of the D.C. Commissioners.<sup>233</sup>

## PLAN DETAILS

A colorful and glossy Webb & Knapp planning publication said of its proposal, "The Webb & Knapp Plan, based on a realistic appraisal of urban scale and urban living, proposes no sharp break with tradition, retaining and regenerating the area's best qualities."<sup>234</sup> While this is one way of describing its approach to reinvigorating the natural advantages of the Southwest's waterfront location, it is far from an accurate portrayal of the overall plan. Clearly inspired by the Justement-Smith Plan – although it called for higher land uses and bigger taxes<sup>235</sup> – the Zeckendorf Plan (as it came to be known) was a bold proposal for dramatically changing the character and amenities of the Southwest. Its authors were I.M. Pei and Harry Weese, who were both then staff architects at Webb & Knapp.<sup>236</sup>

The plan listed four elements as fundamental to its success: the Tenth Street Mall, the Plaza, the waterfront, and the residential neighborhood.<sup>237</sup> For completeness, one might also add to this list the Town Center – the commercial and community hub for the new Southwest. The combination of these elements would help create links within the new Southwest community, as well as between it and the rest of the city, nation, and world. The price tag for this new community and its critical connections was placed at \$108,241,000, or a net cost after reuse of \$56,241,000.<sup>238</sup>

Residentially, the plan called for the construction of 2,300 to 2,800 dwelling units<sup>239</sup> – figures that would later be increased. Half of these would come from six high-rise apartment buildings, whose units would be priced in the range of \$90 to \$150/month for efficiencies to two-bedroom units. 900 units would come from three-story row houses, which would be distributed around residential squares. These would target mid- to upper income families. Another approximately 500 units came from flats and walk-up rental apartments, although these might be minimized in favor of the ownership-oriented row houses.<sup>240</sup> The residential character of the

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<sup>231</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1956, 2; D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1961, 4.

<sup>232</sup> U.S. NCPC, "Letter of Transmittal," *Urban Renewal Plan . . . Area C*, 1-2.

<sup>233</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1959, 13.

<sup>234</sup> Webb & Knapp, *A Redevelopment Plan for Southwest Washington, D.C.; A Webb & Knapp Project* ([New York]: n.p., [195?]), 1.

<sup>235</sup> George Beveridge, "Garrett Untangling Southwest Plans; Only 2 Courses of Mediation Seen," *Evening Star* (Washington, D.C.), [March 1955].

<sup>236</sup> Wolf von Eckardt, "... for Every American Family," in *A Place to Live: The Crisis of the Cities* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1967), 299.

<sup>237</sup> U.S. NCPC, *Urban Renewal Plan . . . Area C*, 15.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*, Appendix B-1.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*, Appendix A-2.

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*, 19-21.



community in the southeast corner of Project Area C, near the waterfront, would be supported by the elimination of Maine Avenue below M Street.<sup>241</sup>

New churches, schools and other community facilities were also part of the plan for Project Area C. Many of these were incorporated into the Town Center plan. Others were linked with the community through neighborhood parks and streets.<sup>242</sup>

The commercial areas were clustered in the following areas: the waterfront, L'Enfant Plaza, L'Enfant Promenade, and the Town Center. Second commercial uses were clustered in two areas: between the expressway and the railroad tracks, and south of Randall Junior High School on South Capitol Street.<sup>243</sup>

The final major element of the plan was the development of new Federal buildings north of the railroad tracks. The inclusion of these buildings in the area was one of the differences between the Zeckendorf Plan and the Justement-Smith Plan.

The following table summarizes the 1954 Zeckendorf land use proposal for Project Area C, in comparison to the previous conditions of use:<sup>244</sup>

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<sup>241</sup> Webb & Knapp, 1.

<sup>242</sup> U.S. NCPC, *Urban Renewal Plan*. . . *Area C*, 22-23.

<sup>243</sup> Webb & Knapp, 3.

<sup>244</sup> U.S. NCPC, *Urban Renewal Plan* . . . *Area C*, Appendix A-1, Appendix E-10-11.

	Old Southwest		NCPC Proposal	
Vacant:	6	1%	0	0%
Residential:	94	21%	65.6	15%
High-Rise Apartments			16.9	
Row Houses, Flats, 2-3 Story Apts.			48.7	
Public and Semi-Public:	42	10%	95	22%
Schools & Recreation			19.4	
Parks			14.6	
Public Community Uses			2.3	
Public Building Sites			51.4	
Churches, Comm. Houses, Institutions			7.3	
First Commercial:	23	5%	39.4	9%
Town Center			13.7	
Waterfront			6.0	
Plaza			19.7	
Second Commercial:	61	14%	29.7	7%
General			25.3	
Railroad			4.4	
Streets and Alleys:	216	49%	211.9	48%
Expressway			160.5	
Other			51.4	
Total acres:	442	100%	441.6	100%

## PROJECT EXECUTION

Following approval of the plan, a Project Area C loan and grant contract was signed with the HHFA on January 7, 1957.<sup>245</sup> Shortly after, on January 11, 1957, the RLA acquired the first parcels of land in Project Area C – these first five squares later would be used for the construction of Federal buildings.<sup>246</sup> Among the privately developed properties, however, the first activities focused on Town Center.<sup>247</sup> By mid-1961, the RLA estimated that 99.6 percent of the Southwest land acquisition was complete, 99.9 percent of the residents had been relocated, and 96.7 percent of the demolition was finished. Although the District Board of Commissioners estimated in 1962 that work in Project Area C would be completed by October 1965, several structures, including buildings around L'Enfant Plaza and restaurants along the waterfront, were not completed until as late as 1973.

<sup>245</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1957, 2.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>247</sup> Federal City Council, *Urban Renewal Program in the District of Columbia*, 32.

In practice, the long road to completion of Project Area C was not as straightforward as simply following the plan. For example, in 1960, Zeckendorf decided to split the development of Project Area C with other developers, retaining for himself the area north of M Street.<sup>248</sup> Thus, the area south of M Street was broken up into six different parcels, several of which were eventually awarded based on design competitions. As a result, the character of the individual residential communities today is less a function of the original Zeckendorf Plan than preferences and styles of the new developers and their architects.<sup>249</sup>

Then, in the early part of that same decade, Webb & Knapp began experiencing economic difficulties that eventually led it to file for bankruptcy. As a result, Zeckendorf had to sell off many of his remaining Southwest properties, including the mid-1964 sales of his undeveloped residential properties and Town Center (both of which were purchased by the developers Bresler & Reiner).<sup>250</sup> Several months later, he had to sell his last property, L'Enfant Plaza,<sup>251</sup> which was purchased by a syndicate including George A. Garrett, first president of Washington's Federal City Council; David Rockefeller; John D. Rockefeller III; Wiley T. Buchanan, Jr.; Lazard Freres & Co.; Gerry Brothers and Co.; and others.<sup>252</sup> This new developer, which called itself L'Enfant Plaza Corporation, continued to retain I.M. Pei and Partners to design the first pair of buildings constructed on the site.<sup>253</sup>

In addition to facing economic issues within its own organization, Webb & Knapp, as well as the RLA, was also plagued by pockets of controversy during the course of the execution of Project Area C. Foremost among these were conflicts over the exclusivity of Webb & Knapp's MOU agreement, the process of determining land acquisition prices, and the levels of resale prices to future tenants of the waterfront.

On the first count, an RLA audit report by the Comptroller General offered strong criticism of the RLA's decision to deal exclusively with one developer. It issued three recommendations for conducting developer negotiations in future urban renewal projects:

- (1) Discontinue the practice of negotiating with only one potential private redeveloper
- (2) Publicize the availability of land and invite competitive bids or proposals
- (3) Refuse to accept redevelopment plans prepared by a private redeveloper if such acceptance obliges the RLA to negotiate only with such redeveloper.<sup>254</sup>

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<sup>248</sup> Goode, 9.

<sup>249</sup> U.S. NCPC and Gutheim, 320-321

<sup>250</sup> Jack Eisen, "Town Center is Sold by Webb-Knapp," *Washington Post*, 25 July 1963; Helen Dewar, "Builder to Change Southwest Design," *Washington Post*, 27 July 1964.

<sup>251</sup> George Lardner Jr. and Jack Eisen, "Webb-Knapp Sells Last SW Parcel," *Washington Post*, 3 November 1964.

<sup>252</sup> Robert J. Lewis, "Construction Nears on L'Enfant Plaza," *Evening Star* (Washington, D.C.), 1965.

<sup>253</sup> Karen Greer, "The Renewal of Southwest Washington," unpublished manuscript, [1988], 16.

<sup>254</sup> U.S. Comptroller General of the U.S., *Report to the Congress of the United States: Audit of District of Columbia Redevelopment Land Agency, Fiscal Years 1957 and 1958* (Washington, DC: GAO, May 1959), Albert J. Headley, Jr. Papers, 5.

These were essentially the operating conditions during negotiations for Project Area B. However, with the second project area, the influence of a single, powerful developer, intent on single-handedly controlling one of the biggest land dispositions in urban renewal history, led to a different course of conduct. Moreover, the delays that resulted in the ironing out of this agreement over several years ultimately cost the city significant sums of money – due to the fact that the land sat vacant, without earning any rent, and without the future developer paying any taxes, until contracts were signed. Had there been multiple developers, with less bargaining power, some parts might have been developed separately, and more favorable economic outcomes might have resulted.

On the second count, the case of the Town Center best illustrates the difficulties and ambiguities surrounding the establishment of land acquisition prices, as well as the perceived privileging of certain developers over others. In September 1956, Webb & Knapp submitted its first proposal for Town Center, agreeing to refer land valuation to the RLA's Real Estate Advisory Board (REAB). The RLA offered the land at the REAB's recommended \$4 per square foot price tag in June 1957. The next month, Webb & Knapp rejected this offer and proposed a price of \$1.25 per square foot, to which the RLA's appraisers countered in October with a revised valuation of \$2.50 per square foot. In January 1958, Webb & Knapp accepted this offer, while the RLA simultaneously turned down an outside offer from the newly formed Town Center, Inc., which had offered to pay \$4 per acre. The RLA justified its actions by stating that it was already in the midst of good-faith negotiations with Webb & Knapp when this second offer was made. At a March 1959 public hearing on the land disposition, the RLA turned down another \$4 offer – this time from Morris B. Cafritz – on the grounds that it was not timely. Also at this time, in the midst of the land disposition hearings, the RLA set the maximum Webb & Knapp land price at \$3 per acre, which the developers accepted as the final price in May. Based on this final price, two 99-year leases were executed on June 2, 1959.<sup>255</sup>

Despite the fact that the two sides eventually met in the middle on the price, several arguments were made to suggest that this price point was still too low. For example, while the RLA's general practice was to require that appraisers base their valuations on the "highest and best" use of the land within the stipulations of the plan, in the case of Webb & Knapp, they typically based the appraisal instead on their plan, rather than on any additional upside potential for the land use. Later independent appraisals of the land resulted in alternative prices of \$4.50-\$5.00 and \$10.00 respectively for the land, further suggesting that sizeable potential income may have been lost through the sale of land to Webb & Knapp at \$3 per acre at Town Center.<sup>256</sup>

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<sup>255</sup> Federal City Council, *Urban Renewal Program in the District of Columbia*, 33; General Accounting Office, "Summary of Land Dispositions in Southwest Project Area C to Various Webb & Knapp Corporations by the District of Columbia Redevelopment Land Agency," in United States. Congress. House. Committee on the District of Columbia, *Urban Renewal in the District of Columbia, House of Representatives; Hearings Before Subcommittee No. 4 of the Committee on the District of Columbia, House of Representatives, Eighty-Eighth Congress, Second Session on the Urban Renewal Program for the District of Columbia; November 17 and 18, 1964* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1964), 2485-2487.

<sup>256</sup> General Accounting Office, "Summary of Land Dispositions ...," in U.S. Congress. House. Committee on the D.C. RLA, 2488-2490.

Finally, in a third area of contention, concerned businesses that wished to return to the waterfront argued that they were being economically prohibited from leasing land there.

### *Project Area C-1*

## EARLY PROGRESS

Project Area C-1 was originally part of Project Area C, but it was separated apart in 1955 when it was determined that, given the lack of development complexities on its 30.5 acres, it could be more expeditiously developed if it was treated separately.<sup>257</sup> This separation also made geographic sense given that public housing and Project Area B already physically isolated the property from the rest of Project Area C. The boundaries of this third project area were roughly Eye Street on the north, Capitol Street South on the east, M Street on the south, and Delaware Avenue on the west. In February 1955, the NCPC took the first steps to enact the creation of this new area.<sup>258</sup> By December 1955, the Planning Commission had approved the plan,<sup>259</sup> and the D.C. Commissioners approved it on March 15, 1956.<sup>260</sup>

The former inhabitants of the area included sixteen businesses<sup>261</sup> and 622 residents. 98.9 percent of these residents were black. The residents resided in 200 dwelling units, 85 percent of which (the highest of all of the project areas) were substandard. Only 14.7 percent of the units were owner-occupied.<sup>262</sup>

## PLAN DETAILS

The plan for Project Area C-1 involved both clearance and rehabilitation. Almost 80 percent of its twenty-four parcels were to go to the District of Columbia for various community uses. These included the continued use of the Anthony Bowen Elementary School, and the construction of a fire station, an automobile inspection station, and a park (the Lansburgh Neighborhood Park). Only two of the parcels were planned for residential usage, and the remainder would be privately developed. Some of the private commercial properties that resulted were the Skyline Inn, the Miller-Dudley Building, and the Bernstein Building. The following table summarizes the total planned land use of the area.<sup>263</sup>

	NCPC Plan	
Residential	1.8	5.9%
Community Facilities	9.3	30.5%
Schools	4.2	13.8%
Parks	1.9	6.2%

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<sup>257</sup> Federal City Council, *Urban Renewal Program in the District of Columbia*, 36.

<sup>258</sup> Robert C. Albrook, "NCPC Has New Road Plan for Southwest," *Washington Post*, 5 February 1955.

<sup>259</sup> Federal City Council, *Urban Renewal Program in the District of Columbia*, 36.

<sup>260</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1959, 13.

<sup>261</sup> Federal City Council, *Urban Renewal Program in the District of Columbia*, 37.

<sup>262</sup> NCPC, *Urban Renewal Plan . . . Area C*, Appendix A-3.

<sup>263</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1958, 12.

D.C. Services	3.2	10.5%
Second Commercial	4.5	14.8%
<u>Streets and Alleys</u>	<u>14.9</u>	<u>48.9%</u>
Total acres	30.5	100%

### PROJECT EXECUTION

Following plan approval, it then took two years for the HHFA to grant the RLA the funding they needed for the project. These delays were caused by legal difficulties, such as Federal real estate tax exemption laws and an HHFA policy of charging the first project within a planning area all of the planning costs – too costly of a burden for the small C-1 area versus the large Project Area C cost base.<sup>264</sup> Finally, by May 1957, the project reached the execution phase, with the RLA's acquisition of the property of Esso Standard Oil Co. This land was then transferred to the developer, the 67 K Corp., which then leased the property to the Miller-Dudley Co., Inc.<sup>265</sup> Thus, more than two years after the decision was made to "fast track" the project,<sup>266</sup> Project Area C-1 became the first and last of the Southwest urban renewal project areas to reach execution. The project was completed in 1963.<sup>267</sup>

### III. Redevelopment Structures and Sites

#### Residential Buildings

##### Buildings Spared

As discussed in the section on old Southwest, the vast majority of the area's former housing was in extremely dilapidated condition. Thus, despite advocacy by Peets, and Goodwillie before him, in favor of rehabilitation, very few of these buildings were saved from the wrecking ball.

In the early 1990s, the D.C. Historic Preservation Division commissioned a survey of all of the historic structures and sites dating prior to 1950 that survived Southwest's urban renewal. The survey identified six such buildings within the urban renewal area that its authors considered "significant to the history of the District of Columbia and/or . . . a sole surviving or exceptional form of architecture for the project area." It labeled these as "Rank 1." Four of these Rank 1 structures were rehabilitated during urban renewal for use as residential and community structures.<sup>268</sup> They are discussed below, as well as in the sections on the residential complexes

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<sup>264</sup> Federal City Council, *Urban Renewal Program in the District of Columbia*, 36.

<sup>265</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1957, 9.

<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>267</sup> D.C. Board of Commissioners, *State of the Nation's Capital*, January 1962, F-6.

<sup>268</sup> Varna G. Boyd and Louana M. Lackey, "Archaeological and Architectural Evaluation and Recommendations," in Elizabeth A. Moore and Charles W. McNett, Eds., *Archaeological Survey of the Southwest*

into which they have been incorporated. The other two Rank 1 structures were religious buildings. Although the survey identified forty-six structures that it classified as Rank 2 or 3,<sup>269</sup> most of these buildings were located outside the redevelopment area, in the southeast corner of the quadrant.

In its 1959 annual report, the RLA described four residential/community buildings as being "of historic architectural importance" and committed to "make every effort to preserve these houses and to encourage appropriate development on adjacent sites."<sup>270</sup> The buildings to which they were referring were the four Rank 1 residential/community structures: the Thomas Law House, the Duncanson-Cranch House, Wheat Row, and the Edward Simon Lewis House.

*Thomas Law House (HABS No. DC-20)*

The Thomas Law House, located at 1252 Sixth Street, is a Federal-era house constructed between 1794 and 1796. Architect William Lovering designed this brick building for the Greenleaf Syndicate speculators. It was leased by Thomas Law, who married Eliza Park Curtis, granddaughter of Martha Washington. It later served as a hotel in the 1860s and a clinic after 1929. In 1965, during urban renewal, it was rehabilitated and incorporated it into the Tiber Island complex as the Honeymoon House, or the Tiber Island Center for Cultural and Community Activities.<sup>271</sup> It is currently open for use by residents of the Tiber Island and Carrollsburg Square complexes.

*Duncanson-Cranch House (HABS No. DC-128)*

The Duncanson-Cranch House, located at 468-70 N Street, is a Federal-era house constructed from 1794 to 1795. Working for the Greenleaf Syndicate speculators, architect William Lovering designed this brick double house to look like a single unit. It served as the headquarters of the Barney Neighborhood House from 1904 to 1960. Between 1964 and 1966, it was rehabilitated and incorporated into the Harbour Square complex as townhouses.<sup>272</sup>

*Wheat Row (DC-10)*

Wheat Row, located at 1315-1321 Fourth Street, is a Federal-era house constructed ca. 1794. Working for the Greenleaf Syndicate speculators, architect William Lovering designed this brick four-unit house to look like a single unit. It would go on to become an intact row of

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*Quadrant of the District of Columbia. Submitted to The District of Columbia Historic Preservation Division* ([Washington, D.C.]: n.p., August 1992), D.C. HPO, 255.

<sup>269</sup> According to the study, a Rank 2 structure "is either a rare example of a particular form of architecture from the 19<sup>th</sup> Century which has been altered to the point that its historic and architectural integrity is in question, or it is a 20<sup>th</sup> Century structure which was designed by well known architects or has other architectural significance to the SW quadrant." A Rank 3 structure "is significant because it was constructed prior to 1950 and survived redevelopment" and typically is characterized by alterations and/or poor structural condition; Boyd and Lackey, 257-258.

<sup>270</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1959, 16.

<sup>271</sup> Alison K. Hoagland, "Thomas Law House," HABS DC-20, 6 July 1983: 3.

<sup>272</sup> Alison K. Hoagland, "Duncanson-Cranch House," HABS DC-128, 24 June 1983: 3.

some of Washington, D.C.'s earliest townhouses. Between 1964 and 1965, it was rehabilitated and incorporated into the Harbour Square complex as townhouses.<sup>273</sup>

#### *Edward Simon Lewis House (DC-26)*

The Edward Simon Lewis House, located at 456 N Street, is a Federal-style house constructed ca. 1817. The architect is unknown; the building's notable former residents include journalists Ernie Pyle and Lewis J. Heath. Between 1964 and 1967, it was rehabilitated and incorporated into the Harbour Square complex as a townhouse.<sup>274</sup>

#### General Description of New Structures

The predominantly Modernist architectural style and planning that characterize the housing developments of Southwest's urban renewal truly make them a product of their era. They were also innovative for their day in their utilization of design competitions for the development of three of the ten newly built housing complexes. Philip Will, Jr., then President of the AIA, called one such competition, "the best conducted competition of which I have any personal knowledge and could serve as a model for other urban renewal agencies."<sup>275</sup> Beyond design alone, the housing developments were also innovative in their policy on residential racial segregation, offering, "the first new high quality housing in Washington marketed on an open occupancy basis."<sup>276</sup>

The housing developments ultimately proved successful from an occupancy perspective, with over 98 percent of their units either rented or sold by 1970<sup>277</sup> (with similarly high occupancy rates throughout the building process). Even today, many residents continue to hold the Southwest's housing complexes in high regard, calling them the one truly successful element of the urban renewal construction. The minimal number of current plans to change this housing – in the midst of myriad plans to drastically alter and fix the errors of past redevelopment on the waterfront, at Waterside Mall, and around L'Enfant Plaza – seems to further support the durability and successfulness of these residential communities.

#### *Housing Types*

In the 1957 *Fortune* article "Are Cities Un-American?" William H. Whyte, Jr. included a sketch of residential complex that incorporated both high-rise towers and low-rise townhouses. The caption beneath the sketch reads, "No one has built a combination tower and garden duplex block of this kind, but a number of architects feel that something like it would be more economical than the standard project – and a lot more pleasant to live in."<sup>278</sup> It was exactly this

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<sup>273</sup> Druscilia J. Null, "Wheat Row," HABS DC-10, 24 August 1983: 3.

<sup>274</sup> Alison K. Hoagland, "Edward Simon Lewis House," HABS DC-26, 7 July 1983: 3.

<sup>275</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1962, 20.

<sup>276</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1963, 9.

<sup>277</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1970, 23.

<sup>278</sup> William H. Whyte, Jr., "Are Cities Un-American?" *Fortune* 24 (September 1957): 127.



type of combined development that marked the vast majority of Southwest's residential complexes.

The housing types built in the renewal area consisted primarily of high-rise elevator apartment buildings, row houses (or townhouses), two-three story apartment houses (buildings with three or more apartments), and flats (buildings with two apartments). Among these, the high-rise units dominate, encompassing roughly 75 percent of the approximately 5,600 new or rehabilitated housing units from Southwest's urban renewal. The *Washington Post's* real estate reporter at the time described the townhouse being developed as "the row house or attached house with new exterior design within new land plans and at locations ranging from midtown to far extensions of suburbia . . . the town house is a 1966-style row hose."<sup>279</sup> In the minority are those units designed for moderate-income families, which make up less than seven percent of the units.

Most of the housing communities were constructed on superblocks, with smaller streets and alleys being closed to create communal open space. Through these superblocks, both high-rise and townhouse residents benefited from communal ownership and/or usage of central open space, or residential squares. The RLA believed that these residential squares might also encourage home ownership by recapturing some of the advantages of rental properties in common area management. The Town Square townhouses and apartments are a notable exception to this trend toward residential squares, as they were constructed principally along the existing boulevards of Eye, Sixth, and G streets.

Housing cooperatives were a second device for encouraging home ownership, bringing high-rise units into the realm of property ownership. These cooperatives were also eligible for Federally insured mortgage financing.<sup>280</sup> River Park was one of the first communities to exploit this ownership model, and it has since spread to many other complexes in Southwest.

While the superblock concept was relatively new, the urban row house was a revival of a housing concept that dated back centuries. Planners of the day found the row house to be extremely well adapted to the automobile, permitting construction to the street-line, next to street-side parking, with a maximum of open space in the back yard. These structures were also economically appealing in terms of their minimization of street-side utility costs and their increase in land usage versus detached housing, socially appealing for middle-income families with children, and aesthetically appealing for the community by making the street an interesting architectural space.<sup>281</sup>

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<sup>279</sup> John B. Willmann, "Town House Comes Back Strong," *Washington Post*, 19 February 1966, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

<sup>280</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1959, 15.

<sup>281</sup> "Row Houses for Cities," *Architectural Forum* 106 (May 1957): 149; Jane Jacobs, "Washington: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Capital?" *Architectural Forum* 104 (January 1956): 98.

In terms of size, the housing units ranged from studios in the high-rise apartment buildings to four-bedroom townhouses.<sup>282</sup> The apartment towers were typically oriented toward singles and couples, while the townhouses were intended mainly for families.

### *Housing Prices*

Although new housing in Southwest was originally intended to span virtually a full range of income levels, from lower middle income to upper income, the majority of housing constructed was oriented toward middle or upper income residents. The redevelopment plan for Project Area B had included an early provision for rental housing priced at \$17 per room per month, but that stipulation was removed in 1959 when it proved to costly and difficult to enact. Advocates of the revocation also cited the fact that alternative housing was already available in the city for this \$4,500 to \$8,000 annual income group.<sup>283</sup> Only in 1966 did the RLA first turn its attention to dealing with this economic class, through construction of the Channel Square complex and rehabilitation of the St. James Mutual Homes.

### Buildings of the New Southwest

This survey describes the new and rehabilitated housing located in the Southwest urban renewal area. It does not, however, include any public housing complexes as none previously existed or were built in the urban renewal area. Rather, tracts for public housing were physically removed from the boundary areas. Some complexes, such as James Creek Dwellings, located to the southeast of the urban renewal area at First and O streets, date back to a period prior to urban renewal. Other communities, such as Greenleaf Gardens, located on the area bounded by Eye, N, Second, and Third streets, were constructed during the redevelopment era, but were located on land that was physically removed from the urban renewal bounds. These complexes played important roles as sites for the relocation of eligible former Southwest residences. However, because they are located outside the urban renewal boundaries, they are not discussed in detail.

The following section provides a brief description of each of the major housing complexes of the new Southwest. The first nine communities – from Capitol Park to Waterside Towers – represent the chronologically ordered middle to upper income private residential housing communities. Except for Town Center Plaza, all included both high-rise apartment buildings and smaller scale townhouses. Except for the townhouses at Town Square, all were Modernist in design. The last two communities – Channel Square and St. James Mutual Homes – were the only moderate income communities built in the new Southwest. Of the entire list, only St. James Mutual Homes was a rehabilitation of existing structures, rather than an entirely new construction.

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<sup>282</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1962, 10.

<sup>283</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1959, 15.

### *Capitol Park*

Capitol Park was the first residential complex to be built in the new Southwest. It first introduced into Southwest a style of architecture that mixed high-rise apartment buildings with row houses arranged around a common area. The complex is located between Half & Fourth streets, Eye Street, and the Southwest Expressway. The architect for the first structure was the firm Satterlee and Smith, while Chloethiel Smith and Associates designed later elements. The landscape architect was Daniel Urban Kiley. Stevens and Scheuer were the developers, and HRH Construction Co. did most of the construction work. Construction began in 1956, the first building was completed in 1959, and the entire complex was finished in 1963.

The complex consists of 1,738 residential units, distributed between 1,339 elevator apartment units in five high-rise buildings and 399 row houses and walk-ups.<sup>284</sup> The component structures include five high-rises – Capitol Park Apartments (now Potomac Place), Capitol Park Towers, Capitol Park Twin Towers (two buildings), and Capitol Park Plaza – and two townhouse complexes – Capitol Park II and Capitol Park IV.

Capitol Park was built on the site of Dixon's Court, the most notorious of the former alley dwelling communities in the old Southwest. It was the first of the racially integrated housing complexes in Southwest – a first for Washington, D.C. Racial integration became a requirement in all of the residential developments of the new Southwest.

As for the accommodations, the apartment units were geared primarily towards single career-persons, while the townhouses were intended for families. Each apartment unit has its own balcony, which is decoratively detailed with tile screens and entered via sliding glass window-doors. The facades of the buildings also show lattice patterns in the brickwork and emphasize their brick and terra cotta materials to create a "domestic" feel.<sup>285</sup> The designs on the facades of the townhouses coordinate slightly with those of the high-rises, although the brick on the townhouses has been painted in pastel colors, while that of the apartment buildings is red or light tan.

The apartment buildings are nine stories in height, with a glassed in non-residential lobby floor called a "no-story," located below the rest of the building. This ground floor glass lobby, with habitable floors raised above on pilotis, is reminiscent of Modernist designs by Le Corbusier, among others. Capitol Park was Washington, D.C.'s first nine-story apartment tower,<sup>286</sup> and this designation of the no-story was important in getting around the Washington, D.C., zoning restriction of an eight-story maximum. It also elevated apartment residents above the height of nearby townhouses, addressing privacy issues surrounding these building types' juxtaposition. The orientation of most townhouses' balconies away from the apartment buildings further increases privacy.

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<sup>284</sup> Southwest Community Council and Southwest Neighborhood Assembly, *Southwest Guide, 1965-1966* (Washington, D.C.: Kirby Lithographic Company, 1965), 12.

<sup>285</sup> Goode, 409.

<sup>286</sup> *Ibid.*, 408.

Other zoning and financing restrictions required similar creativity as that employed in developing the “no-story.” For example, by placing the supporting pillars of a pavilion in a wading pool, the pool became eligible for mortgage assistance. Of course, the pool only passed the review of the Department of Public Health when the property owner agreed to stock it with mosquito-eating *Gambusia* fish.<sup>287</sup> Having endured the bureaucratic hassles involved in mixing urban renewal with D.C. zoning regulations, Chloethiel Woodard Smith commented that simple density and utility specifications, along with the requirement that plans be approved by the RLA, should be the only zoning restrictions in an urban renewal area of this sort.<sup>288</sup>

Landscaping, as designed by Dan Kiley, was an integral element of the park-like housing complex. In addition to the wading pool, the grounds included canopied pavilions, open green space, and a 37' x 8' glass mosaic mural by Leo Lionni. (Today, however, all of these features have either been eliminated or moved in order to make space for additional building construction). The glass lobbies of the apartment towers align with key corridors of the landscaping, such as the former H Street East-West corridor – to unite the interior and exterior. As soil conditions did not permit underground garages, parking is provided underneath the apartment buildings and on lots on the grounds.<sup>289</sup> Well after project completion, chain-link fencing was also added around the boundaries of some of the apartment towers complexes.

The Capitol Park development process began on December 8, 1953, when the RLA acquired its first parcel of property – 825 Third Street – the first parcel acquired in the entire Southwest urban renewal area. This parcel contained a two-story brick row house and 810 square feet of land, formerly owned by William J. Emmett of Southeast.<sup>290</sup> Ground was broken for the first building on April 9, 1958,<sup>291</sup> and it was largely completed by the summer of the next year.<sup>292</sup> The overall complex was completed in 1963.

The completed complex received a variety of reviews. Most notably, it won several multiple awards, including an AIA merit award in 1960 for Capitol Park Apartments and an FHA Honor Award for the Capitol Park II townhouses.<sup>293</sup> *Architectural Forum* also praised the architects' and developer's daring spirit in taking a risk on the area and in pursuing creative design solutions to do that. Its authors wrote that Satterlee and Smith had “proved that perseverance, imagination, and idealism can produce good design over almost any bureaucratic obstacles.” In addition, architecture critic Wolf von Eckardt wrote that its townhouses are “even more titillating and important architecturally than any avant-garde effort would have been. In a manner so pleasing it becomes positively exciting, they manage to combine an appeal to familiar

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<sup>287</sup> “First Step Toward a New Washington” *Architectural Forum* 111 (December 1959): 118.

<sup>288</sup> Jane Jacobs, 101.

<sup>289</sup> *AIA Journal*, April 1960, quoted in Design Research, 30.

<sup>290</sup> Richard L. Lyons, “Land Agency Buys 1<sup>st</sup> Area B Property,” *Washington Post*, 9 December 1953.

<sup>291</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1958, 8.

<sup>292</sup> Federal City Council, *Urban Renewal Program in the District of Columbia*, 28.

<sup>293</sup> Protopappas, John J. and Lin Brown, Eds., *Washington on Foot: 24 Walking Tours of Washington D.C., Old Town Alexandria, and Historic Annapolis*. (Washington, D.C.: National Capital Area Chapter American Planning Association, 1984), 57-58; “Honor Awards 1960-1969,” *AIA Home Page*, [http://www.aia.org/library/honors\\_1960\\_1969.asp#list](http://www.aia.org/library/honors_1960_1969.asp#list), accessed 6 July 2004.

associations of prettiness with our intellectual demands on honest modern architecture.”<sup>294</sup> On a less positive note, *Architectural Forum* also commented on the excessive costs – in terms of time, effort, and money – required to make it possible, cautioning that urban renewal was not yet easy or profitable for developers and that isolated efforts would not succeed without being part of a larger scheme.<sup>295</sup>

### CAPITOL PARK APARTMENTS (POTOMAC PLACE)

Capitol Park Apartments was the first structure to be completed in the urban renewal of Southwest. This high-rise building, located at 800 Fourth Street, is now called Potomac Place Apartments. This structure and its site was the first testing ground for many of the legal, technical, and economic issues of the Capitol Park complex and of Southwest’s urban renewal overall. It was completed in mid-1959.<sup>296</sup>

Six months after construction was completed, only half of the units were rented, due in part to the building’s pioneering status. At that time, its grounds were physically surrounded by substantial construction activity, many potential future residents were uncertain as to what the new Southwest would be like. Moreover, the building existed as an isolated island within a sea of construction, without even adequate shopping facilities. This was due to the successful effort by the developer of the adjoining Project Area C, Webb & Knapp, to alter project area plans to consolidate all shopping in one location on its own property, and construction of that shopping center had been delayed. Once progress improved, however, the building quickly filled. However, none of the occupants that moved were members of the lower-middle class. Indeed, Capitol Park Apartments was the site at which the RLA initially tried to test, and later rescinded, the idea of offering one third of residential units at the affordable rent level of \$17 per room per month.

President Eisenhower played several parts in the history of Capitol Park Apartments. First, he sent congratulations to the ground breaking ceremony, lending greater significance to the occasion. In addition, he toured Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev through the completed complex in 1959, showcasing the development as an example of the United States’ progress in eliminating slums.

### OTHER HIGH-RISE BUILDINGS

The other apartment buildings, all of which were smaller than Capitol Park Apartments, were completed over the next six years. By fiscal year 1962, construction was in progress on Capitol Park Twin Towers, located at 101 and 103 G St., and Capitol Park Towers (one building), located at 301 G Street.<sup>297</sup> The Towers was completed in August 1962,<sup>298</sup> and the Twin Towers were completed in summer 1963. The Towers contains 289 units, and the Twin

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<sup>294</sup> Von Eckardt, *A Place to Live*, 301-302.

<sup>295</sup> “First Step Toward a New Washington,” 115.

<sup>296</sup> Federal City Council, *Urban Renewal Program in the District of Columbia*, 28.

<sup>297</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1962, 10.

<sup>298</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1963, 15.

Towers, which are connected by a ground-level enclosed passageway, contain a combined 320 units.<sup>299</sup> Capitol Park Plaza, located at 201 Eye Street, opened in 1965 as the last of the Capitol Park high-rises. It contains 338 units.<sup>300</sup>

## TOWNHOUSES

Two sub-communities – Capitol Park II and Capitol Park IV – contain the townhouses. Capitol Park II, the older of the two communities, is situated on 3.29 acres between Third, G, and I streets.<sup>301</sup> It includes seven structures, with eighty-one single-family townhouses.<sup>302</sup> Construction began in May 1960 and completed in fiscal year 1961. A considerable delay occurred prior to the start of construction due to mortgage disagreements between the developers and the Federal Housing Association. Amendments to Section 220 of the Housing Act of 1959, however, cleared the way for progress to be made.<sup>303</sup> Capitol Park IV, bounded by Third and G streets and Delaware Avenue, includes 319 units in 242 townhouses on 6.05 acres.<sup>304</sup> Both communities are condominiums today.

### *Town Center Plaza*

Town Center Plaza was the first residential complex to be completed in Project Area C. It includes four identical high-rise apartment buildings located between Third, Sixth, Eye, and M streets, with the Waterside Mall situated in the middle between two pairs of buildings on its east and west. The address of the eastern pair is 1001 - 1101 Third Street, and that of the western pair is 1000 - 1100 Sixth Street. Gorsuch Methodist Church and the dwellings of Casey's Alley, Fairfax Court, and Allens Court formerly occupied the overall Town Center site.<sup>305</sup> LM. Pei designed the structures, and Webb & Knapp was the developer. The four buildings include a total of 512 elevator apartment units,<sup>306</sup> consisting primarily of efficiencies.<sup>307</sup> In 1981, the tenants of Town Center Plaza West purchased their two buildings to form a cooperative.<sup>308</sup> They are now known as Marina View Towers.

The buildings are unique within the Southwest, as they are the only apartment buildings that lack balconies and accompanying townhouses. Their facades are dominated by near floor-to-ceiling tinted glass panels and a lattice of concrete structural support. The uniform interior curtains (in the east buildings) and vertical blinds (in the west buildings) become almost a de

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<sup>299</sup> James R. McBee, "Potomac Place Historic Preservation Review Board Application for Historic Landmark or Historic District Designation," 16 January 2003, D.C. SHPO, section 7, page 2.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid..

<sup>301</sup> Ibid..

<sup>302</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1961, 23.

<sup>303</sup> Federal City Council, *Urban Renewal Program in the District of Columbia*, 28.

<sup>304</sup> McBee, section 7, page 2.

<sup>305</sup> *Insurance Maps of Washington, D.C.*, Volume 2 (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1959), 246, 247.

<sup>306</sup> D.C. RLA, "The Architecture of the Southwest Urban Renewal Area," memo, Albert J. Headley, Jr. Papers.

<sup>307</sup> Pamela Scott and Antoinette J. Lee, *Buildings of the District of Columbia* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 244.

<sup>308</sup> *Southwester*, April 1981.

facto part of the exterior façade. The structures incorporate the same no-story with pilotis and glassed-in ground-floor lobbies as Smith employed at Capitol Park. While architectural critic Wolf Von Eckardt criticized the towers as “a bit self-consciously glassy, bare, and square,”<sup>309</sup> the FHA recognized the design with an FHA Honor Award for Residential Design.<sup>310</sup>

As with Capitol Park, the development process at Town Center Plaza experienced significant delays. One of the most controversial of these surrounded disagreement over land values, as previously discussed in the section Project Area C.<sup>311</sup>

Construction on the first pair of apartment buildings, Town Center Plaza East, began on January 15, 1960<sup>312</sup> and finished in 1961. By mid-1961, they were 65.5 percent occupied.<sup>313</sup> Construction on the two buildings of Town Center Plaza West began in fiscal year 1961 and was completed in January 1962.<sup>314</sup>

### *River Park*

At River Park, architect Charles M. Goodman continued the Capitol Park tradition of combining high-rise and townhouse communities, although he distinguished his development from that of Chloethiel Woodard Smith most notably in his choice of materials and shapes. River Park was also the Southwest’s first cooperative, an ownership model adopted by many of the new developments later in their lifetime. Bounded by Third, Fourth, N, and O streets, and located at 1301 Delaware Avenue, the development includes 518 residential units, divided between 384 apartment units in a single high-rise building and 134 adjacent townhouses.<sup>315</sup> The First Church of Christ (Holiness) and the dwellings of McLean Avenue formerly occupied the site.<sup>316</sup> Construction began in the second half of 1961 and completed in March 1963.<sup>317</sup>

Owing to the material interests of the project’s developer, Reynolds Metal Company, aluminum is the defining material of the River Park complex. Seeking to join its competitor, ALCOA, in demonstrating the potential for aluminum in residential construction, Reynolds asked Goodman, who had worked previously for ALCOA, to incorporate aluminum into the complex as much as reasonably possible. Thus, the material is used for the construction of “window frames, doors, sunscreens, garden fences, outdoor sculpture, and staircases,”<sup>318</sup> serving both structurally and decoratively.

River Park is often referred to as a town within a town. Goodman specifically tried to create an urban, human-scale feel, carefully arranging the townhouses in the central open space,

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<sup>309</sup> Von Eckardt, *A Place to Live*, 304.

<sup>310</sup> Protopappas and Brown, 53.

<sup>311</sup> Federal City Council, *Urban Renewal Program in the District of Columbia*, 32.

<sup>312</sup> Ibid.

<sup>313</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1961, 24.

<sup>314</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1963, 13.

<sup>315</sup> Protopappas and Brown, 57.

<sup>316</sup> *Insurance Maps of Washington, D.C.*, 262.

<sup>317</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1961, 23; D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1963, 9; SCC and SWNA, 12.

<sup>318</sup> Scott and Lee, 242.

with the high rise situated to the side<sup>319</sup> as a physical barrier between the development and the public housing complex on the other side of Delaware Avenue. The location and large size of the high-rise was also influenced by the size and shape of the site, combined with the density requirements. A grand promenade separates the high-rise and the townhouses, and smaller paths weave between the townhouse structures. Parking is all at ground level, in lots located off to the side of the property, or adjacent to selected townhouses along the outer edges.

The high-rise is nine stories high, with glass-enclosed lobbies, community rooms, and mailboxes on Smith's no-story level. Although it is often referred to as two buildings, with an open air space between two glass lobbies, it is actually one structure. Balconies, punched aluminum screens, and large glass panels mark the building's façade.

The townhouses are distinctive not only for their aluminum, but also for their barrel-shaped roofs. Goodman was opposed to having the high-rise residents look down on a sea of slab roofs and, although he considered high-pitched gable roofs as well barrel vaults, he preferred the barrels in the end for their attractiveness and variety.<sup>320</sup> Some residents have complained, however, about issues of ventilating the barrel vaults. The townhouses were also painted a variety of colors and were oriented towards each other to benefit resident socialization.

In addition to building placement, River Park's community orientation was also reinforced by its cooperative status. This ownership structure enabled Reynolds – who was not primarily in the development business – to quickly extricate itself from the project. In addition, it also pushed residents to take a greater personal stake in the project's success. While the development's rules stipulated that 97 percent of the units had to be purchased before ownership would be transferred to the cooperative, ownership actually went through in fall 1963, with only 90 percent of the units sold.<sup>321</sup>

As with other Southwest developments, the bold Modernist style at River Park received mixed reviews. The authors of *Buildings of the District of Columbia* criticized the bleak landscaping, particularly relative to the greener grounds of adjacent Carrollsburg Square.<sup>322</sup> However, *Progressive Architecture* praised the "lively" courtyards "in the richest urban tradition,"<sup>323</sup> and Wolf Von Eckardt lauded its "medieval" character and remarked, "I have rarely seen the intimacy and delight of a medieval town so well captured with honestly modern means."<sup>324</sup>

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<sup>319</sup> *River Park and its Neighbors: 25 Years of Urban Renewal, 1963-1988: Panels on Southwest Redevelopment and River Park Mutual Homes Development. Saturday October 15, 1988* ([Washington, D.C.: Reynolds Metal Co., 1988]). 89.

<sup>320</sup> *River Park and its Neighbors . . . Panels on Southwest Redevelopment and River Park Mutual Homes Development*, 89-90, 117.

<sup>321</sup> *Ibid.*, 160-161.

<sup>322</sup> Scott and Lee, 242.

<sup>323</sup> "Renewal by Reynolds," *Progressive Architecture* (July 1963), 50.

<sup>324</sup> Von Eckardt, *A Place to Live*, 302.



Among the practical concerns of residents, the complex's location created several issues related to the Southwest's mixed-income status. While no River Park residents were members of the lower income class, the complex bordered on the property of a public housing complex to its east and eventually that of a middle-income complex to its south. From the early days, this caused some difficulties, including conflicts between the River Park pool and the poor young public housing residents who could do little more than watch their neighbors with envy. Today, as well, troubles continue as lower income residents use the River Park property as a thoroughfare and are suspected of causing minor acts of vandalism. Thus, residents are currently voting on whether or not to enclose the otherwise open community with a fence, as has already occurred at Capitol Park.

### *Tiber Island*

The Tiber Island community is located slightly northwest of River Park, at 429 N Street, on the area bounded by M, N, Fourth, and Sixth streets. Union Alley, Union Court, Greenleaf Public School, and a Potomac Electric Power Company building formerly occupied the site.<sup>325</sup> Keyes, Lethbridge & Condon were the architects, and Eric Paepcke was the landscape architect.<sup>326</sup> Berens Companies developed the property, and the Charles H. Tompkins Construction Company built it. In total, the complex includes 455 residential units, split between 368 elevator apartments and eighty-seven townhouses. The apartments make up four eight-story high-rise towers, and the townhouses populate twenty-one two-three-story structures.<sup>327</sup> Construction on the complex began in spring 1963 and was completed in 1965.<sup>328</sup>

Concrete and brick are the dominant materials of the complex. The apartment buildings employ "exposed reinforced concrete frames, filled in with gray-tan brick panels," and the townhouses use "brick bearing-wall construction, trimmed with precast concrete."<sup>329</sup> These materials also dominate the landscape, including a large, eight and one-half-acre concrete central plaza built as the roof of the exclusively underground two-level parking garage. There is also a fountain in the middle of the plaza, and the towers are arranged perpendicular to each of its four sides. In addition to the central plaza, the townhouse residents enjoy private gardens. An emphasis on privacy, rather than socialization, as at River Park, led to the decision to orient many townhouse balconies toward blank walls. Moreover, recessed glass windows and concrete balcony facades are a dominant visual.<sup>330</sup>

As at River Park, the architects sought to integrate the apartment towers and townhouses into an urban and human-scale community, in this case with a pinwheel arrangement of the major forms.<sup>331</sup> Unlike Capitol Park, but similar to River Park, these forms were integrated by a

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<sup>325</sup> *Insurance Maps of Washington, D.C.*, 261-262.

<sup>326</sup> Design Research, 32.

<sup>327</sup> D.C. RLA, "The Architecture of the Southwest Urban Renewal Area," *Tiber Island Home Page*, <http://tiberisland.com/tiberisland/>, accessed 2 July 2004.

<sup>328</sup> Protopappas and Brown, 53.

<sup>329</sup> Scott and Lee, 243.

<sup>330</sup> "The 1966 Honor Awards," *ALA Journal* 46 (July 1966): 30-31.

<sup>331</sup> Scott and Lee, 242.

consistency of material and appearance. Shared facilities, such as the incorporation of the historic Thomas Law House as a community center, further tie the complex together. The complex is also unique in that it was the result of the first of four design competitions employed in Southwest – initiating a marked change in the method of land disposition in the area. In the competition, the panel of judges did not know the names of the interested firms, but simply judged the projects based on their designs. The Board of Directors preestablished land prices that were not subject to negotiation. This particular competition, which occurred in fiscal year 1962, involved eleven competitors.<sup>332</sup>

Another notable feature of Tiber Island, and its sister complex, Carrollsburg Square, is that its townhouses were the first condominiums to be sold in Washington, D.C., following the December 1963 legalization of condominiums.<sup>333</sup> Since then, the apartments have been converted from rental units into cooperatives.

The Tiber Island complex was well received. In awarding the complex a 1966 Honor Award, the AIA jury praised the architects' achievement of "both monumentality and warmth by honest structure and knowledgeable use of materials," calling it an "outstanding example of a successful urban renewal project, and one which should inspire other developers and their architects."<sup>334</sup> In his own review, local architecture critic Wolf von Eckardt described the complex's brutalist features, remarking that the architects "have taken all the brutality out of it without diminishing the strong vigor of their statement," achieving "a unity that [the Capitol Park and River Park] projects lack."<sup>335</sup>

### *Carrollsburg Square*

Having also won the second design competition in Southwest, architects Keyes, Lethbridge & Condon designed a sister complex to Tiber Island on the opposite side of Fourth Street. This visually and materially similar complex, called, Carrollsburg Square, is located at 1250 Fourth St., on an area bounded by M, N, and Fourth streets and Delaware Avenue. The dwellings of M Place (or Van Street) formerly occupied the site.<sup>336</sup> The landscape architect, developers, and construction company are all the same as at Tiber Island.<sup>337</sup> The complex includes 387 apartments in three high-rise buildings, along with 140 townhouses.<sup>338</sup> Construction began in March 1964<sup>339</sup> and finished in 1965.<sup>340</sup>

The choice of materials and façade design of the buildings at Carrollsburg Square are virtually identical to those at Tiber Island. Moreover, both complexes also incorporate

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<sup>332</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1962, 20.

<sup>333</sup> Goode, 411.

<sup>334</sup> "The 1966 Honor Awards," 30-31.

<sup>335</sup> Von Eckardt, *A Place to Live*, 303.

<sup>336</sup> *Insurance Maps of Washington, D.C.*, 262.

<sup>337</sup> Goode, 411.

<sup>338</sup> D.C. RLA, "The Architecture of the Southwest Urban Renewal Area"; SCC and SWNA, 15.

<sup>339</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1964, 6.

<sup>340</sup> Protopappas and Brown, 57.

underground parking garages to preserve the pedestrian space at grade. It is at ground level, however, where the greatest variation between the two projects occurs. While sparse concrete dominates the plaza at Tiber Island, more greenery and vegetation were incorporated at Carrollsburg Square. In addition, rather than having a large plaza, Carrollsburg Square's grounds are divided up into less formal small courts and gardens.

In terms of ownership, Carrollsburg Square's townhouses, like those of Tiber Island, have always been condominiums. Today, the former rental apartment units have been converted to condominiums as well.

### *Harbour Square*

Harbour Square was the second residential development in Southwest on which Chloethiel Woodard Smith worked, this time solely as part of her own firm, Chloethiel Woodard Smith and Associates. The property lies to the south of Tiber Island and west of River Park, at 500 N Street, and is bounded by Fourth, N, and O streets and the waterfront. Huntoon Court and Huntoon Place formerly occupied the site.<sup>341</sup> As at Smith's Capitol Park, the landscape architect was Daniel Urban Kiley. The developers were Shannon and Luchs and John McShain.<sup>342</sup> The complex consists of 465 total residential units, distributed between 448 elevator apartments, in three connected high-rise structures, and seventeen townhouses.<sup>343</sup> These structures are located on 6.3 waterfront acres.<sup>344</sup> Construction began in summer 1963<sup>345</sup> and finished in 1966<sup>346</sup>

As at Capitol Park, landscaping was an important element. Even the pedestrian and automobile entrances and the motor court were carefully planned, including the hanging of plants above the motor court to create a garden feel.<sup>347</sup> The bulk of the parking, however, is provided underground. A large grassy courtyard also surrounds a large water garden, which includes fountains, sculptures, seating, platforms, and water plant life. Willow trees abound as well, particularly as a western boundary between the complex and the waterfront promenade. Perhaps more than at any other residential complex, the housing at Harbour square is tightly connected with views of the Washington Channel.

The apartment towers form a U shape around the major courtyard. The apartments contained within have varied layouts (there are more than 300 floor plans), including some duplex configurations.<sup>348</sup> Many units have balconies, as well as roof gardens. Smith once commented, "I never use windows where I can use doors,"<sup>349</sup> and the French door-style windows

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<sup>341</sup> *Insurance Maps of Washington, D.C.*, 262.

<sup>342</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1961, 23.

<sup>343</sup> SCC and SWNA, 15; Goode, 426.

<sup>344</sup> *Two on Two at the Octagon*, 8.

<sup>345</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1963, 19.

<sup>346</sup> Protopappas and Brown, 54.

<sup>347</sup> Scott and Lee, 242.

<sup>348</sup> *Two on Two at the Octagon: Design for the Urban Environment, The Octagon, Washington, D.C., January 16 – March 18, 1979*, photocopy of exhibition program, D.C. HPO, 9.

<sup>349</sup> Winzola McLendon, "Architect Designs No Ivory Towers," *Washington Post*, 30 July 1967, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

on the Harbour Square apartment buildings illustrate that preference in practice. The halls on which the apartments are located are only single-loaded, with windows on the other side. Thus, as the AIA noted in an exhibition brochure, "It extends the airiness of the apartments into public areas and destroys the 'cell-like' feeling of apartments that many buildings convey."<sup>350</sup> The townhouses line the outside of selected portions of the complex. In addition to newly constructed buildings, they also include the historic preservation of Wheat Row, the Duncanson-Cranch House, and the Edward Simon Lewis House, which serve as several of the present-day townhouses and give an evolutionary urban character to the development. Most apartment and townhouse units are oriented toward the water, increasing the insular, but peaceful, character of the community.

Many Southwest residents regard Harbour Square as one of the nicest and most luxurious of the complexes in Southwest. James Goode, in his survey of Washington's "best addresses," calls the complex "the most important" of the "apartment house projects designed in Southwest and one of the city's most significant of the 1960s."<sup>351</sup> Representing an opposing view, however, Wolf von Eckardt described the complex as "self-consciously overloaded and busy."<sup>352</sup>

*Chalk House West / Riverside, Edgewater, 1401-1415 Fourth St.*

Chalk House West, designed by architects Lapidus, Harle & Liebman, was the winner of the third Southwest design competition. This competition included eighteen competitors.<sup>353</sup> Fourth, O, and P streets and the waterfront bound the complex. The D.C. Transit Co. car barn and trolley yard formerly occupied the site.<sup>354</sup> The complex contained 324 dwelling units, split between 280 elevator apartment units in two high-rise buildings, thirty-two maisonettes, and twelve townhouses.<sup>355</sup> The developer was the D.C. Realty & Development Corp., a subsidiary of D.C. Transit, which was headed by Roy Chalk.<sup>356</sup> Construction on the complex began in fiscal year 1963 and finished in 1966.<sup>357</sup> The first tenants began moving in during September 1965.<sup>358</sup> In 1969, S. Finley Thomas purchased the complex and renamed it Finley House.<sup>359</sup> Today, it has been broken up into several sub-developments: Riverside Condominium Apartments (located at 1425 Fourth Street), Edgewater Condominium Apartments (located at 410 O Street), and 1401-

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<sup>350</sup> *Two on Two at the Octagon*, 10.

<sup>351</sup> Goode, 410.

<sup>352</sup> Von Eckardt, *A Place to Live*, 304.

<sup>353</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1962, 10.

<sup>354</sup> *Insurance Maps of Washington, D.C.*, 262.

<sup>355</sup> SCC and SWNA, 15; D.C. RLA, "The Architecture of the Southwest Urban Renewal Area."

<sup>356</sup> SCC and SWNA, 15.

<sup>357</sup> D.C. RLA, 1963, 18.

<sup>358</sup> "Chalk House West Gets First Tenants," *Washington Post*, 11 September 1965, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

<sup>359</sup> "Chalk Complex Sold for More Than \$7 Million," *Washington Post*, 20 December 1969, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

1415 Fourth Street.<sup>360</sup> Prior to its October 3, 1980 conversion to condominiums, Riverside had been used as rental housing.<sup>361</sup>

The former Chalk House complex has a much less unified appearance than its nearby neighbors. The nine-story high-rise buildings of Riverside have white, rectangular, metal-railed balconies jutting off of half of the apartments. Light brown bricks cover the majority of the façade. The townhouses echo this pattern. The lobby floor is partially encased in glass, while another a concrete plaza covers the rest. Vegetation covers much of the interior complex grounds, which surround a community pool. The abundance of natural features on the property were carefully planned in order to offer "the privacy of a waterfront home with the conveniences of an apartment in the city."<sup>362</sup> Parking is located underground. The townhouses, now incorporated into Edgewater, are fairly cold, constructed of dark brick. A greenway splits the complex, running along the former O Street. The overall feel of the community, nestled next to Fort McNair on the complex's south and the waterfront on its west, is fairly quiet and secluded.

### *Town Square*

Town Square, along with Capitol Park, provides the northern residential boundary to the Southwest urban renewal-era construction. The complex is bounded by the Southwest Expressway, Seventh, Eye, and Fourth streets, excluding the southeastern portion of that block, which is occupied by Southeastern University, Amidon Elementary School, and its associated playground. Charles S. Bresler and Burton J. Reiner, operating as Charles Burton Builders, Inc., were the developers.<sup>363</sup> The architecture firm Cohen-Haft Associates designed the tower,<sup>364</sup> Town Square Towers Apartments, which is located at 700 Seventh Street, on the former sites of Fays Alley and Lettie Street.<sup>365</sup> Macomber and Peter, noted restoration architects, designed the townhouses,<sup>366</sup> which are located on the former sites of Springman Court, Pig Alley, Burke Court, Burke Alley, Page Alley,<sup>367</sup> Willett Alley, and Smithsons Court.<sup>368</sup> The tower consists of 282 apartment units. Construction began in 1965 and finished in 1967. The Federal-style townhouses were built in phases, with the first cluster of approximately ninety two- and four-bedroom townhouses built at Sixth and Eye Streets, starting in 1963. The next cluster, begun in 1964, brought the total number of townhouses to 180. They opened in 1965.<sup>369</sup> More such units were built later in this area. The overall complex also contains five low-rise apartment buildings.

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<sup>360</sup> Protopappas and Brown, 55-56.

<sup>361</sup> *Southwester*, November 1980.

<sup>362</sup> "New Apartment Living Related to Waterfront," *Washington Post*, 24 October 1965, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

<sup>363</sup> SCC and SWNA, 15; "Bresler, Reiner Plan 700 Town Houses," *Washington Post*, 2 October 1965, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

<sup>364</sup> "Town Square Towers—," *Washington Post*, 30 September 1967, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

<sup>365</sup> *Insurance Maps of Washington*, 234.

<sup>366</sup> SCC and SWNA, 15.

<sup>367</sup> *Insurance Maps of Washington*, 234.

<sup>368</sup> *Ibid.*, 237.

<sup>369</sup> "Georgetown Flavor for Southwest," *Washington Post*, 16 February 1963, ProQuest Historical Newspapers; "A View of Town Square," *Washington Post*, 11 September 1965, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

Although the high-rise and townhouses of Town Square share a common complex name and access to a community pool, they exist fairly separately. This is particularly true in the exterior materials and appearance of the structures, as well as their current management. The eight-story tower's most distinctive feature is its polygonal honeycomb white balconies that jut out from the brick building. The roofline also repeats this pattern as arches, creating cathedral ceilings in some of the penthouse units. Most parking is contained in an underground structure beneath the building. The Federal-style townhouses have predominantly light tan brick facades. These are some of the only newly constructed housing units in Southwest that do not display Modernist features. On the interior, when built, they incorporated all-electric Gold Medallion appliances.<sup>370</sup> The units employ an alternating system of first- or second-floor entrances. The houses line main streets and also border individual interior gardens. Most parking for those units is in individual garages or surface parking located in small lots or along the street. Today the tower operates as condominiums, and the townhouses are organized into non-profit homeowners' associations, such as Townhouse Management One, Inc.

### *Waterside Towers*

Waterside Towers was the last housing community to be completed in the new Southwest. It is located to the west of Town Center Plaza West, at 907 Sixth Street, on the area bounded by Eye and Sixth streets and Maine Avenue. This was the former site of Enoch Ambush Public School and the residential communities of Lettie Street, Pig Alley, and Ambush Alley.<sup>371</sup> Its 434 units are divided between three high-rise apartment buildings and three-story townhouses.<sup>372</sup> The architecture firm Chloethiel Woodard Smith and Associates designed the complex, which was developed by Charles S. Bresler and Burton J. Reiner. During part of the planning stage, the complex was known as Trilon Plaza, or Trilon Square.<sup>373</sup> Construction began in fiscal year 1969 and was finished in the second half of 1970.<sup>374</sup>

The complex is arranged in a semi-hexagonal U-shape around a central, open courtyard. Underground parking is contained underneath the courtyard. The townhouses wall in the courtyard, creating an inwardly focused community. The apartment towers have tan brick facades with concrete trim. The units, which are operated as rental housing, have individual metal rectangular balconies. The building façade ripples in and out, accommodating space for the balconies, which align almost flush with the rest of the façade. Unusually for Southwest, the towers contain rental units on nine levels, with pilotis below.

### *Channel Square*

Channel Square was the first moderate-income housing complex in the new Southwest. It lies to the south of River Park, at 325 P Street, and is bounded by Third, Fourth, O, and P

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<sup>370</sup> "More Gold Medallion Homes Are Open," *Washington Post*, 15 May 1965, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

<sup>371</sup> *Insurance Maps of Washington, D.C.*, 245.

<sup>372</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1969, 23.

<sup>373</sup> *Ibid.*; Design Research, 35.

<sup>374</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1969, 23.

streets. Facilities of the D.C. Transit Co. formerly occupied the site.<sup>375</sup> Harry Weese and Associates designed the complex.<sup>376</sup> Channel Square consists of 278 residential units – distributed between 203 high-rise residential units in a single high-rise apartment building and seventy-five garden apartments and townhouses – and approximately 5,000 square feet of commercial space. Prior to construction, the complex was also known as the Ralph Bush Houses.<sup>377</sup> Construction began in fiscal year 1968 and ended in fiscal year 1969.<sup>378</sup>

The buildings of Channel Square have tan brick facades. The townhouse facades are distinguished by the semicircular arched openings on the brick faces of the units. The grounds are relatively spare, with a parking lot to the north and walkways between facing rows of townhouses. The complex also includes a play area.

More distinctive than the architecture of Channel Square, however, was the income group it targeted for its residents. As “middle-income housing designed under section 221 D3 of the Housing Act of 1949, which subsidized the developer’s interest rate and kept rents down,”<sup>379</sup> the development served those residents who fell between the income restrictions of public housing and the level of income required to live in the other Southwest residential communities. Families of various sizes could be accommodated in the one- to four-bedroom apartment units<sup>380</sup> – a contrast to the emphasis on efficiencies and other low occupancy units in many of the other apartment buildings in the area. Those eligible families that had been displaced by public action were given priority among the long list of initial potential residents.<sup>381</sup> Today, this tradition continues, with many residents benefiting from Section Eight housing subsidies.

### *St. James Mutual Homes*

Like Channel Square, the 107 units of St. James Mutual Homes were also intended for moderate-income residents. The distinctive feature at St. James, however, was that the complex had been rehabilitated, unlike the fresh residential construction that dominated most new Southwest housing communities. Designed by architect Albert I. Cassell, the complex had formerly served as segregated public housing for the black community.<sup>382</sup> From the time of its rehabilitation, the eight-building apartment complex operated as a cooperative. As such, it was the country’s “first cooperative housing financed under the FHA 221 (d)(3) program for moderate-income families.”<sup>383</sup> Existing tenants were given the first option on buying their units,<sup>384</sup> and the Foundation for Cooperative Housing assisted with the conversion.<sup>385</sup> The RLA

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<sup>375</sup> *Insurance Maps of Washington, D.C.*, 262.

<sup>376</sup> Protopappas and Brown, 56.

<sup>377</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1967, 4.

<sup>378</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1968, 1; D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1969, ii.

<sup>379</sup> Protopappas and Brown, 56.

<sup>380</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1969, 23.

<sup>381</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1968, 7.

<sup>382</sup> *River Park and its Neighbors: 25 Years of Urban Renewal, 1963-1988* [Washington, D.C.: Reynolds Metal Co., 1988], 12.

<sup>383</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1967, 2.

<sup>384</sup> “RLA Acts on Renewal Housing,” *Washington Post*, 7 November 1963, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

originally purchased the 1930s-era complex in 1959.<sup>386</sup> The completed complex, located on the area between O, P, Second, and Third streets, at 210 O Street, opened in 1967.<sup>387</sup> The buildings themselves are covered in dark brick, and landscaped courtyards surround them.

## Community Facilities

### Schools

#### *Former Conditions and Buildings Spared*

The old Southwest contained ten segregated public schools, including eight elementary schools and two junior high schools. The elementary schools were Ambush, Amidon, Bell, Anthony Bowen, S.J. Bowen, Fairbrother, Greenleaf, and Syphax. Not all of these were located within the urban renewal area. The junior high schools were Jefferson and Randall.<sup>388</sup> The children of Southwest attended segregated senior high schools outside the quadrant. Black children attended Dunbar (academic), Armstrong (technical), or Cardozo (commercial), and white children attended Roosevelt (academic), McKinley (technical), or Eastern (commercial).<sup>389</sup>

Generally speaking, the area's elementary schools were old, "barn-like,"<sup>390</sup> and had small, inadequate play spaces.<sup>391</sup> Enrollment in the elementary schools attended by black children was over capacity, while that in those schools attended by white children was under capacity.<sup>392</sup> Of all of the schools in the old Southwest, only two of the elementary schools – William Syphax Elementary School and Anthony Bowen Elementary School – survived urban renewal urban renewal. (As Syphax was located outside the urban renewal area, it is not discussed here in detail.) In addition, the play areas associated with the two junior high schools were deemed "moderately satisfactory."<sup>393</sup>

#### ANTHONY BOWEN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Anthony Bowen Elementary School is located at 101 M Street, at the corner of M Street and Delaware Avenue. It was built on a 4.02-acre site in 1930, with an addition completed in 1931, and another added in 1976. During redevelopment, its twenty-four rooms had a capacity of 864 students. In October 1953, it was operating at 97 percent of capacity; by March 1956, following the displacement of many of Southwest's residents, it was down to 70 percent of

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<sup>385</sup> "Apartments Rehabilitated for Low-Income Families," *Washington Post*, 5 August 1957, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

<sup>386</sup> Paul A. Schuette, "Cooperative Given 90 Days to Finish Buying SW Project," *Washington Post*, 20 November 1964, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

<sup>387</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1967, 4.

<sup>388</sup> U.S. NCPC, *Urban Renewal Plan . . . Area C*, Plate 13.

<sup>389</sup> U.S. NCPC, *Redevelopment Plan . . . Area B*, 6.

<sup>390</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1959, 8.

<sup>391</sup> U.S. NCPC, *Redevelopment Plan . . . Area B*, 6.

<sup>392</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>393</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1959, 8.



capacity.<sup>394</sup> Today, the three-story brick building with an area of 71,900 square feet has a capacity of 360 students, ranging from pre-kindergarten through sixth grade.<sup>395</sup> It is the only existing Southwest elementary school located within the urban renewal area to survive redevelopment.

#### JEFFERSON JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Jefferson Junior High School is located at 801 Seventh Street, at the corner of Seventh Street and Maine Avenue. It is one of the two junior high schools in Southwest that survived urban renewal. Its property includes athletic fields, as well as the Georgian revival school building, which was built in 1940. This school was a replacement for the previous Jefferson Junior High School, which was built in 1872 at Sixth and D streets. The District's then municipal architect, Nathan Corwith Wyeth, designed the later building,<sup>396</sup> which has a T-shaped plan and is constructed of brick, with a white wooden cupola at the top. During redevelopment, this building's twenty-five rooms could accommodate 603 students. In October 1953, it was operating at 62 percent of capacity, and in March 1956, it was up to 98 percent of capacity.<sup>397</sup> Today, the building area of 109,000 square feet has a capacity of 820 students.<sup>398</sup> Prior to urban renewal, and its associated construction and opening of a freestanding public library building in late 1965, one wing of the building served as the Southwest Branch Library.<sup>399</sup> In the early 1960s, the school also led the way in adapting the "Amidon Plan" (see below) to junior high school teaching.

#### RANDALL JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Randall Junior High School was located at 65 Eye Street, at First and Eye streets. It was the second of the two junior high schools in Southwest that survived urban renewal. It includes 150,000 square feet of space inside the building, located on two acres of land, next to the Randall Recreation Center.<sup>400</sup> The two- to three-story brick building was constructed in 1902, and an addition was added in 1949. Its forty-nine rooms had a capacity of 1486. In October 1953, it was operating at 113 percent of capacity, but by March 1956 it was down to 49 percent of capacity.<sup>401</sup> Today, the school building has been adaptively reused as the home of the non-profit Millennium Arts Center, among other uses.

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<sup>394</sup> U.S. NCPC, *Urban Renewal Plan . . . Area C*, Plate 13.

<sup>395</sup> District of Columbia Public Schools, "D.C. Public Schools: Area D Building Profiles," *Facility Master Plan Update*, Fall 2003, 304, <http://www.k12.dc.us/dcps/OFM/masterplan/Building%20Profiles/Area%20D/Dtotal.pdf>, accessed 5 August 2004.

<sup>396</sup> "Southwest Branch Library History," *District of Columbia Public Library Home Page*, <http://www.dclibrary.org/branches/sow/history.html>, accessed 21 July 2004.

<sup>397</sup> U.S. NCPC, *Urban Renewal Plan . . . Area C*, Plate 13.

<sup>398</sup> District of Columbia Public Schools, 307.

<sup>399</sup> "Southwest Branch Library History."

<sup>400</sup> "Artistic Touch: SW School to Become New Arts Center," *Washington Business Journal*, 21 May 1999, <http://washington.bizjournals.com/washington/stories/1999/05/24/story6.html>, accessed 7 July 2004.

<sup>401</sup> U.S. NCPC, *Urban Renewal Plan . . . Area C*, Plate 13.

### *Buildings of the New Southwest*

The new Southwest had five public schools (four of which were in the urban renewal area) – including the two existing pairs of elementary and junior high schools, plus one new elementary school – as well as one private school. In addition, River Park housed a cooperative nursery school.<sup>402</sup> The new public elementary school was Amidon Elementary School, and the new private high school was the Hawthorne School. Today, although all or portions of all six of the school buildings in existence after urban renewal still survive today, only four still function as schools. Of those, one – the Hawthorne School – has changed function slightly, moving up the educational ladder from high school to university.

The story of Southwest's schools intersects significantly with issues of race relations in the city. As a new public elementary school was opened, district boundaries prevented many nearby public housing children from attending the underutilized facilities, even while their own school was overcrowded. Eventually, in 1966, the D.C. School Board consolidated the neighborhood's three elementary schools – Amidon, Bowen, and Syphax – in an attempt to equalize the level of education being offered to students. Rather than having all financial support go to the predominantly upper class Amidon School, the Board hoped that the quality at all three schools would increase. The upper class largely opposed this consolidation, however, and many responded by moving their children to private schools.

### AMIDON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Amidon Elementary School is located at 401 Eye Street, on the corner of Fourth and Eye streets. This was the former site of a church and the residential communities of Cunningham Alley and Smithsons Court.<sup>403</sup> Amidon was the only new public school constructed in Southwest during urban renewal. Architects Lublin, McGaughy and Associates designed the building, for which ground was broken on August 4, 1959. Construction completed in the second half of 1960, and a dedication took place on May 9, 1961. Classes commenced prior to the dedication, on September 7, 1960.<sup>404</sup>

The 4.84-acre site includes the school building at the southern end of a rectangular tract, with a large recreational playground to the north. When completed, the building had capacity for approximately 800 students, ranging from kindergarten through sixth grade, and dispersed among twenty-six classrooms.<sup>405</sup> Its form was of two perpendicular rectangular blocks. In 1975, a third rectangle was added to the northern side. Today, it has a building area of 70,800 square feet, with a capacity of 452 students, ranging from pre-kindergarten through sixth grade.<sup>406</sup> The building itself is two stories in height, with a red brick façade, ceramic tile trim, and a flat roof. A large concrete pillar stands to the left of the front entryway. The addition introduces several concrete spandrels and columns in the brick façade.

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<sup>402</sup> SCC and SWNA, 6-7.

<sup>403</sup> *Insurance Maps of Washington*, 237.

<sup>404</sup> "Dedication: Margaret M. Amidon School," pamphlet, 9 May 1961, Albert J. Headley, Jr. Papers.

<sup>405</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>406</sup> District of Columbia Public Schools, 304.

This building and site were a replacement for the former Amidon School, which was built in 1882 at Sixth and F streets. That building was closed on June 30, 1957. Both schools were named in honor of Margaret M. Amidon, a woman described in the new school's dedication program as "educator – leader – friend – pioneer."<sup>407</sup>

The most distinctive feature of the new Amidon School was not its architecture, but its educational program. The "Amidon Plan," under which the new school operated from the outset, and which later spread to other schools in Washington, D.C., implemented a "track system" and a curriculum of pre-planned lessons focused on teaching knowledge and skills earlier in a student's career. For example, kindergarten became less focused on playtime.<sup>408</sup>

Another unique aspect of the school was that, although it catered primarily to children who lived west of Delaware Avenue (as well as some public housing children), it originally operated as a magnet school that was open to select students outside its typical geographic district. The decision to open enrollment in this way – effectively welcoming any students in the district whose parents could transport them to the school – was in part a means to fill the school's initial excess capacity while many of Southwest's residential buildings were still being built. Although the 1965-1966 school year welcomed more public housing students to the school,<sup>409</sup> the school's policy of integrating the children of all of Southwest's socioeconomic groups ended after the 1975-1976 school year.<sup>410</sup>

#### HAWTHORNE SCHOOL/SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

The Hawthorne School was located at 501 Eye Street, at the corner of Sixth and Eye streets. It was one of the two new schools constructed during Southwest's urban renewal, and the only one of those that was a high school. In addition, it was the only private school located in the new Southwest. Architect Charles M. Goodman designed the structure, building off of and adding to the original Metropolitan Boys' Club Building on the site.<sup>411</sup> The Boys' Club occupied the middle portion of Sixth Street, halfway between G and H streets, and Goodman's addition was added on to the south, right at the corner of H and Sixth streets.<sup>412</sup> Construction began in fiscal year 1964,<sup>413</sup> and the school commenced use with the 1964-65 school year.<sup>414</sup> It closed in 1972 due to financial difficulties. In September 1972, the Southeastern University's Washington campus took over the site, which it continues to inhabit today.<sup>415</sup>

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<sup>407</sup> "Dedication: Margaret M. Amidon School."

<sup>408</sup> SCC and SWNA, 26.

<sup>409</sup> "Amidon Will Admit More SW Children," *Washington Post*, 4 September 1965.

<sup>410</sup> Richard E. Prince, "SW School Project Ends in Failure," *Washington Post*, 30 July 1976.

<sup>411</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1963, 18.

<sup>412</sup> *Insurance Maps of Washington, D.C.*, 237.

<sup>413</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1963, 18.

<sup>414</sup> SCC and SWNA, 27.

<sup>415</sup> *Southeastern University Home Page*, <http://www.seu.edu/gen/president/history.htm>, accessed 7 July

The original Hawthorne School began in fall 1956 in Northwest Washington, D.C., as a private, coeducational high school for students in grades nine through twelve. The school's curriculum attempted to provide a more personalized education that involved students and was based upon their own understanding and experience level. The school's original founders were Alexander G. and Eleanor W. Orr.<sup>416</sup>

The new Southwest building consists of the original structure, the exterior façade of which Goodman removed to apply sheathing of exposed concrete, and a 28,197 square foot addition. The two-story, glass and concrete-walled addition served as the school's common area, while the original structure housed classrooms, the gymnasium, and other core uses.<sup>417</sup> The campus-like feel was well suited to the alternative educational environment of Hawthorne School, as well as to the later adoption of the site by the Southeastern University community.

The Brutalist-style building consists of a thick flat concrete roof band slightly overhanging one or two horizontal bands of continuous glass windows – one for each floor. Thick vertical concrete columns support the building, with equally spaced thin concrete dividers breaking up the glass into smaller sections. The effect is of a near-constant concrete façade when viewed from an angle, but a more open façade when viewed head-on. The middle and bottom supporting concrete spandrels are recessed from the emphasis of the columns and top roof overhang.

## Churches

### *Former Conditions and Buildings Spared*

The old Southwest contained approximately twenty churches.<sup>418</sup> Of these, the RLA saved only two, and even those were salvaged only after successful protests by parish leadership and members of the congregations. Those churches include St. Dominic's Roman Catholic Church and the original Friendship Baptist Church. Both congregations received new or altered facilities through urban renewal.

### *Buildings of the New Southwest*

During redevelopment, the Southwest area was surveyed to determine which and how many churches would be needed, in addition to the two salvaged Catholic and Baptist churches. Initially, the Washington Federation of Churches recommended the development of four new churches, with one for each of the Episcopalian, Lutheran, Methodist, and Presbyterian congregations.<sup>419</sup> This section of the report documents the currently existing churches that have connections to the urban renewal era.

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<sup>416</sup> SCC and SWNA, 27.

<sup>417</sup> "A Bulldozer Isn't Always Needed," *Washington Post*, 4 April 1964.

<sup>418</sup> U.S. NCPC, *Redevelopment Plan . . . Area B*, 6.

<sup>419</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1959, 16.

As redevelopment pushed many of the old churches out of Southwest, and the new churches would cater to a new community of residents, the churches that remained formed the Parish Ministry of Southwest, a cooperative effort to attract the residents of the new Southwest to their facilities. Their efforts included sending a parish caller to greet new residents. In the end, however, although more than half of the new residents affiliated themselves with one of the area's churches, local churches estimated in the mid-1960s that as few as 5 percent of residents actually attended services.<sup>420</sup> Today, this continues to be an issue, as church facility capacity exceeds demand, and parishes like St. Matthew's are looking to downsize to smaller structures.

### ST. DOMINIC'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

St. Dominic's Church is located at 630 E Street, at the corner of Sixth and E streets. The corner stone was laid on November 19, 1865, and construction finished in 1875.<sup>421</sup> Architect Patrick Keely designed it in the English Gothic style.<sup>422</sup> The church was originally slated for demolition so that the Southwest Freeway could traverse its location, but today the building's familiar 250-foot spire still rises above its freeway neighbor. Through the assistance of the Most Reverend Philip M. Hannan, a religious representative to the Federal City Council and a friend of several Congressmen, the main church building was saved.<sup>423</sup>

The freeway did, however, cost the parish its fifty-year-old parochial school building, its convent, and its rectory.<sup>424</sup> Eventually, new construction replaced some of that lost space. On December 16, 1960, ground was broken for a new priory – a four-story, forty-one room residence and chapel. This was the former site of the St. Dominic's Alley residential community.<sup>425</sup> The new priory was designed by architect Thomas H. Locraft and Associates.<sup>426</sup> Construction was completed in February 1962.<sup>427</sup> Today, the church – nestled incongruously between the high-speed expressway, the towering ten-story Nassif Building, and other corporate neighbors – continues to operate in Southwest by serving a much different community than before. Attendees at its services include Federal office workers, subway commuters, and residents of the new Southwest.<sup>428</sup>

### FRIENDSHIP BAPTIST CHURCH

The original Friendship Baptist Church is located at 734 First Street at the corner of First and H streets. The Virginia Avenue Baptist Church congregation, a group founded in 1875, funded the building of the structure in 1886-1887. The church's early congregation consisted

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<sup>420</sup> SCC and SWNA, 28.

<sup>421</sup> Mary E. Moran, *St. Dominic's Parish, Washington, D.C.: A Sesquicentennial Celebration, 1852-2002* (Chevy Chase, MD: Posterity Press, 2002), 13, 16.

<sup>422</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>423</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>424</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>425</sup> *Insurance Maps of Washington*, 234.

<sup>426</sup> D.C. RLA, "The Architecture of the Southwest Urban Renewal Area."

<sup>427</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1962, 13.

<sup>428</sup> Moran, 47-49.

primarily of former African American slaves. The Italianate Gothic brick building, designed by an unknown architect, experienced two additions: a plain brick rear in 1930, and a gabled, brick-faced front in 1952. The African American architect Howard D. Woodson designed the second addition.<sup>429</sup> Although originally slated for demolition, the church's pastor, Reverend Benjamin H. Whiting, argued that the church was a bedrock neighborhood institution and succeeded in 1952 in removing the building from the urban renewal area. Nine years after a new church was built for the church's congregation in 1965, they sold the old building to Miracle Temple of Faith Baptist Church. In 1982, it was sold to the Redeemed Temple of Jesus Christ. In 2001, due to deterioration, the building closed.<sup>430</sup> Today, a new developer, Steve Tanner, is in the process of converting the site to condominium units, while maintaining much of the old, white, dilapidated structure.<sup>431</sup>

The new Friendship Baptist Church is located at 900 Delaware Avenue at the corner of Delaware Avenue and Eye Street. With a seating capacity of 1,500, it is the largest church in the Southwest urban renewal area. Vaughn, Ferguson and Woodson designed the building. Construction began in 1964,<sup>432</sup> and the church was dedicated in September 1965. Some of the church's modern features include its aluminum cross and front tower crown.<sup>433</sup>

#### CHRIST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Christ United Methodist Church is located at 900 Fourth Street, at the corner of Fourth and Eye streets. A firehouse formerly occupied the site.<sup>434</sup> Architect A. Hensel Fink of Philadelphia, PA, designed it. Construction began on May 13 1962<sup>435</sup> – the first groundbreaking for a church in the new Southwest – and completed in 1963. It was dedicated on Palm Sunday 1963.<sup>436</sup> The church formed in 1961 due to the merger of Gorsuch Methodist Church, formerly located at Fourth and L streets in Southwest, and Lewis Memorial Church, formerly of Northwest Washington, D.C.<sup>437</sup>

The building itself, along with a minister's house next door, sits on a three-quarter acre lot. The sanctuary, which has a V-shaped roofline and doorway overhang, with a large glass front façade, can seat 300 individuals. The rear chancel wall is decorated with a glass tile mosaic designed by Odell Prather and executed by New York's Venetian art Mosaics Studio using Italian materials. The original marble façade was replaced with limestone in 1983, and other renovations took place in the interior in 1994 and 1997.

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<sup>429</sup> Patricia Sullivan, "Condominiums Proposed Around Historic Church," *Washington Post*, 3 June 2004, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A9461-2004Jun2.html>, accessed 5 August 2004.

<sup>430</sup> Historic Preservation Review Board, "Friendship Baptist Church," 27 May 2004, D.C. HPO.

<sup>431</sup> Sullivan.

<sup>432</sup> "Friendship Baptist Structure Started," *Washington Post*, 6 June 1964.

<sup>433</sup> Wolf von Eckardt, "Acrobatic Churches Lack Meaning," *Washington Post*, 3 June 1966.

<sup>434</sup> *Insurance Maps of Washington, D.C.*, 247.

<sup>435</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1962, 12; *Christ United Methodist Church Home Page*, [http://www.cumcdc.org/about\\_christ](http://www.cumcdc.org/about_christ), accessed 8 July 2004.

<sup>436</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1963, 9, 15.

<sup>437</sup> *Christ United Methodist Church Home Page*.

## BETHEL PENTECOSTAL TABERNACLE

Bethel Pentecostal Tabernacle is located at 60 Eye Street, at the corner of Half and Eye streets. Architect Eimer Cappelman designed the building.<sup>438</sup> Construction began in spring 1962<sup>439</sup> and was completed in 1963.<sup>440</sup> It was dedicated on March 31, 1963.

The Assembly of God congregation dates back to 1921. Its 230 Twelfth Street building in the old Southwest, to which it moved in 1948, was demolished in 1960. Its replacement urban renewal brick building can seat 300 in its sanctuary. At one point, its space was also leased out to the Southwest Jewish community, in search of a place to worship.<sup>441</sup> The building itself consists of a simple brick structure with a black roof and a center side entryway looking out on Eye Street. A rectangular tower rises in the middle of the northern side, with a simple cross on top. Elongated windows punctuate the walls.

## ST. MATTHEW'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

St. Matthew's Lutheran Church is located at 222 M Street, at the corner of M Street and Delaware Avenue. Architect Milton Prassas designed the building. Construction began in spring 1962<sup>442</sup> and finished in 1964.<sup>443</sup>

The church can seat 400 people, and its fellowship hall can accommodate 200-300. The entrance of this Modernist church faces west, with a steep triangular roof overhanging a glass façade. The shape supposedly symbolizes "folded hands reaching into the sky."<sup>444</sup> White, triangular roof arches line the sides, and arches of more obtuse angles provide a covered overhang to the entrance walkway. A tall spire rises in the back.

Currently, the fellowship hall also serves as the location for community meetings, such as those of the Southwest Neighborhood Association. The overall building is currently in severe disrepair, and the congregation is considering replacing it.

## WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Westminster Presbyterian Church is located at 400 Eye Street, at the corner of Fourth and Eye streets. The church was formerly located in the old Southwest at 437 Seventh Street.<sup>445</sup> The

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<sup>438</sup> D.C. RLA, "The Architecture of the Southwest Urban Renewal Area."

<sup>439</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1962, 12.

<sup>440</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1963, 9.

<sup>441</sup> SCC and SWNA, 29.

<sup>442</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1962, 12.

<sup>443</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1963, 15.

<sup>444</sup> John B. Willmann, "A Walk in Southwest Will Refresh Tired Eyes," *Washington Post*, 16 February 1963, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

<sup>445</sup> SCC and SWNA, 29.

architect of the new building was Harry E. Wagoner, of Philadelphia, PA.<sup>446</sup> Construction began in 1964<sup>447</sup> and finished in 1965. It was dedicated in October 1965.

The Southwest congregation itself dates back to 1853.<sup>448</sup> The group has typically been progressive, opposing Vietnam and supporting women's rights and the inclusion of gays and lesbians. Its new building's Modernist physical design – one of two such Modernist designs in the new Southwest – is similarly progressive.

The building has rusticated concrete walls, with a precast concrete cross in front of a concrete screen entrance. The originally exposed concrete aggregate interior floor has been replaced by ceramic tile in a Hopi Indian pattern. In addition to hosting religious services, the building is also the site of "Jazz Night in Southwest," held every Friday.

#### ST. AUGUSTINE'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

St. Augustine's Episcopal Church is located at 600 M Street, at the corner of Sixth and M streets. Construction began in 1964 and completed in fiscal 1966. Prior to the completion of the building, the congregation met at Hogate's Restaurant, on the Waterfront. St. Augustine's is unique in that it was not one of the church buildings originally planned for the Southwest, but its development was the result of a poll by James L. Hudson, the parish visitor, of the new Southwest's residents' religious affiliations.<sup>449</sup> Once their new building was completed, the congregation also shared the space with the Jewish community of Temple Micah, which lacked space of its own.<sup>450</sup>

The building itself is a simple, small box with a modestly peaked concrete roof. It has a brick lower façade, topped by a row of continuous windowpanes stretching from side to side. The panes increase in height as they approach the center, meeting flush against the peaked roof. Tall, but modest wooden doors are centered at the front entrance. A tall, thin, metal cross rises from the building's roof. The grounds surrounding the church are simple as well, covered with trees and grass. Given the church's proximity to the waterfront, the building is potentially at risk of alteration or removal during upcoming waterfront redevelopment.

#### RIVERSIDE BAPTIST CHURCH

Riverside Baptist Church is located at 680 Eye Street, at the corner of Seventh and Eye streets. Ward and Hall, of Springfield, VA, designed the building. Construction began in April 1967 and finished in February 1968.

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<sup>446</sup> D.C. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1963, 19.

<sup>447</sup> Ibid.

<sup>448</sup> *Westminster Presbyterian Church Home Page*, <http://www.westminsterdc.org/location.htm>, accessed 8 July 2004.

<sup>449</sup> "Religious Poll Leads to New Church in SW," *Washington Post*, 7 March 1964, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

<sup>450</sup> "Sharing at St. Augustine's Leads to More Ecumenity," *Washington Post*, 30 January 1971, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.